



# THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

*A JOURNALIST'S SCRAPBOOK*

BY

VERNON BARTLETT

AUTHOR OF

"MUD AND KHAKI," "BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE PEACE  
CONFERENCE," "SONGS OF THE WINDS AND SEAS," ETC.

WITH A FOREWORD BY

SIR PHILIP GIBBS, K.B.E.



HEATH CRANTON LIMITED

6 FLEET LANE

LONDON, E.C.4

1925

The author desires to express his gratitude to the editors of *The Times*, *The Manchester Guardian*, *The New Statesman*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, of Boston, and *The English Herald Abroad*, of Montreux, for the kind permission to include in this book material which has appeared, in one form or another, in their papers.

*Printed in Great Britain for Heath Cranton Limited, by  
Northumberland Press Limited, Newcastle-on-Tyne*

## FOREWORD

ANYBODY who could see "the brighter side of European chaos" in the years following the Great War deserves a laurel crown for his sense of humour, or a cap and bells as an international jester. And yet reading this scrap-book of a fellow journalist, who took the same roads through chaos as myself, though I hadn't the luck to travel with him, I feel that he has let the world down lightly and refrained too much from that irony which I am sure he was tempted to express more bitterly than he has allowed himself. For a man with a sense of humour like this might have played no end of a game with those eminent people who, with the noblest expressions of idealism, and love for suffering humanity, and devotion to justice, arranged a peace which contains a hundred causes for new war. He might have held up to the ridicule of history those new frontiers, passport regulations, tariff walls, racial animosities, and standing armies, which have Balkanized a large part of Europe in order to make it "safe for democracy." He might have brightened the gaiety of nations by revealing even more blindingly than he has done, and with less restraint upon his humour, the great joke of that golden lie, which for a long time persuaded the



## FOREWORD

victors of war that all their losses, the exhaustion of their old reserves of wealth, and their piled-up debts would be repaid by those who had lost, out of some mysterious and hidden hoard of gold. In fact a young man who saw the brighter side of European chaos with smiling understanding eyes might have made us all feel extremely uncomfortable.

Mr. Vernon Bartlett has spared us the sharpest edge of humour, but throughout his pages of unrelated incidents and travel notes his smile breaks through and plays behind his words. He has a quick appreciative eye for the *comédie humaine*, a charming irreverence in the presence of pomposities, the art of snapshotting scenes and characters without studio effects, an unusual observation of detail. It all seems rather trivial, at first glance, but it is just these trivialities that future historians will be glad to get. His story of smuggling a typewriter tells us more about the difficulties of European trade than an official report on international commerce. A little anecdote about some Bolsheviki who tried to barter gold watches for some scraps of food in a German prison camp pulls the curtain aside from one of those scenes of misery which have not been recorded in official histories. The detail of the springs on a German bicycle wheel does not seem very important, except to those who can see that it was one reason for the German collapse, owing to the lack of rubber, and the breakdown of their whole machinery of life because of the British blockade which stopped their import of raw material. It is illuminating as well as amusing that when he called on an Italian

## FOREWORD

deputy—one of the Fascisti—and put his hand to his hip-pocket to get his card case he found himself covered by a revolver, since which he has given up using a hip-pocket. The alarm of the German waiter in Düsseldorf when Mr. Bartlett carelessly pulled back the restaurant curtain so that the hungry crowd outside could see the diners and the dinner-tables is one of those little touches which make a vivid picture of what happened in the Ruhr at the time of the Communist revolt.

But I must not try to give this book a false importance as a serious historical document. It does not pretend to be that. It is a new "Sentimental Journey" in Europe after the War, by a young man with a sharp eye and the spirit of comedy. Everything he sees is lightly touched. It is just a journalist's notebook, without serious purpose, and intended to amuse. It amused me.

PHILIP GIBBS



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD . . . . .	5
BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION . . . . .	11
IN THE LONDON OFFICE . . . . .	15
THE PEACE OF PARIS . . . . .	20
A BACKWATER OF WAR . . . . .	25
ORANGES AND LEMONS . . . . .	33
SMUGGLING A TYPEWRITER . . . . .	37
MUSSOLINI'S ITALY . . . . .	39
THE MATTERHORN . . . . .	44
RUMANIA . . . . .	47
THE BELGIAN COAST . . . . .	51
BERLIN . . . . .	55
THE LATIN QUARTER . . . . .	64
FRASCATI . . . . .	68
THE POLISH "CORRIDOR" . . . . .	73
MURDERED ENGLISH . . . . .	80
ALPENSTOCKS . . . . .	85
"VEDI NAPOLI E POI MUORI" . . . . .	87
TYPES . . . . .	92
SINAIA IN WINTER . . . . .	98
"WIPERS" . . . . .	101
A PAPAL ELECTION . . . . .	105
BELLAGIO . . . . .	112

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE ISER ROLLING RAPIDLY . . . . .	115
MURDER IN BESSARABIA . . . . .	116
MY MOTOR-CAR . . . . .	122
RECONSTRUCTING ITALY . . . . .	127
DANZIG . . . . .	135
STRASBOURG AND METZ . . . . .	140
A PHILANTHROPIST MALGRÉ MOI . . . . .	144
HOUSE-HUNTING IN ROME . . . . .	145
"THE PLAYGROUND OF EUROPE" . . . . .	149
SAN MARINO . . . . .	159
WITH THE REDS IN THE RUHR . . . . .	164
SIENA . . . . .	172
MADRID . . . . .	174
KING CONSTANTINE IN EXILE . . . . .	179
"GASPER" IN CLUJ . . . . .	187
LAGO DI BRACCIANO . . . . .	189
ON SKIS . . . . .	193
VIENNA . . . . .	196
THE GENOA CONFERENCE . . . . .	200
THE ETERNAL CITY . . . . .	209
THE LEAGUE AT WORK . . . . .	214
INDEX . . . . .	222

# THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

## BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

I HAVE no particular object in writing this book and there is no particular reason why anyone should read it. I have eschewed politics, partly because one's private opinions on the political motives which guide after-war Europe are unprintable, and partly because nobody would read about them even if I did write about them. Possibly nobody will read this book although politics are barred, but, on the other hand, possibly somebody will, for the Europe of to-day has its interesting sides, however indifferently they may be described.

It would be honest to state at once that this book is intended to be, in the main, amusing. I realize that nothing is more dangerous than to attempt to write an amusing book. But a serious book is nearly as dangerous, and is far less fun to write.

If I have no particular object in view, I confess to a vague hope, to a hope that the following pages may help to bring home to people who do not live on the Continent what life on the Continent has really been like since, and even before, the War. Heaven knows we have read enough gloomy pages of description and enough prophecies of disaster, and heaven also knows that there will be enough of such

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

pages still to come. Indeed, who knows but that by the time this book appears on the bookstalls (if the bookstalls will take it, which I am inclined to doubt), the mapmakers may be busy again drawing new frontiers in Europe and more blood may have been shed in the disheartening struggle for peace.

The English Channel is hundreds of miles wide. I have been in no place on the Continent since the War where there was not an atmosphere of uneasiness and uncertainty. But in England, despite unemployment and heavy taxation, people talk of golf, jazz-bands and the latest divorce case. The United States, on the other hand, are so far away that they are still discussing Europe as it was in 1919 and not as it is in 1925. The tragedy of Europe is that civilization still runs the risk of dying slowly of anæmia; there is nothing sufficiently sensational about its fading away to arouse public opinion, to make millions of people say to themselves, as they did in 1914, "This is appallingly serious, and we must do something to stop it." Professors are paid less than labourers, and composers eke out precarious livings by playing in café orchestras. The only people who make money are those who sell the necessities or the less refined luxuries of life.

Possibly only Great Britain and the United States were strong enough to help Europe to rapid recovery. Sentiment, tradition and — above all — distance, prevented them from doing so. The starvation of hundreds of thousands of people in Russia probably affected the average Englishman less than the illness of his dog. And yet he is not to be blamed, for Russia is hundreds of miles away and his dog is in a kennel in his garden, or in a basket far closer to the fire than is good for it.

Therefore, I entertain a vague hope that even this book may help, to some slight degree, to make people

## BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

realize the more human side of European events. Its pages should be taken in small doses, mixed with the foreign news in the daily papers. And even then I have diluted it with what is called, I believe, "picture stuff" for the possible benefit of those who are lucky enough to be able to live entirely for the pleasures of the moment or who are philosophical enough to remember that even the sufferings of Europe during the last ten years and the next ten years will be almost imperceptible in the graph of human suffering throughout the ages.

And that is enough of this rather gloomy preface—gloomy because I have already broken my word and have referred to politics, which are seldom cheerful. At one time they depressed me to such an extent that I read all I could about bathing and eating incredibly luscious fruits on some island in the Pacific Ocean. Here alone would one find complete peace, wearing hibiscus flowers in one's hair and a *lava lava* round one's middle instead of a tin helmet and an uncomfortable uniform. This must be my future home. At least, so I thought until members of my family, fearful of so great a change, took to leaving alarming books about spiders and tropical pests in conspicuous positions on every table in the house. At any rate, in Europe, if conditions are bad, I can vote for a change, but a tarantula has, doubtless, a healthy contempt for an Act of Parliament.

Two last words. If I wished to punish a fellow creature very severely, I might condemn him to count the number of times the word "I" appears in these pages. Fortunately I have neither the power nor the inclination to treat any one thus hardly, but at least I think I can claim that the majority of such stories as there are in this book are told against myself. This is my only excuse.

And if any reader should find in this book cause



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

for offence I would hasten to assure him that no offence is meant. Things have struck me as amusing, and I have jotted them down, but never with evil intent. I am no subtle propagandist on behalf of one nation or one interest. If I were capable of subtle propaganda, it would be in support of international goodwill and good-humoured understanding. As the Italians say, "*tutto il mondo è paese*,"—all the world's one country.

*March, 1925.*

## IN THE LONDON OFFICE

WHEN, fresh from the Army, I was engaged by the News Editor of a London daily as a junior reporter, at the princely salary of three pounds a week, I imagined I was on the road to fame. My inspirations would be read by nearly a million people a day, and I should probably be able to write what I liked. I hardly slept for excitement the night after my offer of work had been accepted.

My first day as a reporter was spent in accompanying a colleague on his investigations into a peculiarly disgusting murder story at Chatham. On my second day I had to go to a famous catering shop, buy a pat of butter, bring it out on a piece of previously-weighed paper, take it to be weighed and work out how much the caterers were charging the great British Public for each pound of butter. In my first week I only had eight lines in the paper, and they were very far from being lines that I enjoyed writing. With each rebuff my skin seemed to become thinner instead of thicker. I had never thought life could be so unpleasant. In the reporters' room—as in every other reporters' room—there were two or three elderly men who had come to the paper as young men with ambitions probably quite as keen as my own, and who were quite definitely failures. I would lie awake at night in terror lest I, in my turn, should have to fight that same battle against the ever-increasing odds of up-to-date “stunt” journalism.

There were days of fame, however. For three

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

glorious weeks I was "pet dog" editor. At that stage of the War there was talk of doing away with pets in order to economize food supplies, and every day came some hundred and twenty letters, from which I had to concoct pathetic arguments in favour of pets and stern, patriotic ones against them. My half column became more popular—or so I used to think—than anything else in the paper, and my pride would have become unbearable had my paper not sent me one day to find out the price of potatoes at Covent Garden.

The market, I found, was a terrifying place. Everybody seemed too busy to talk to me, and nobody looked as though he would appreciate the suggestion of profiteering that was implied in any question about the price of potatoes. Still, it had to be done, and, picking the least villainous-looking man, I asked him boldly the fateful question, telling him I was a newspaper reporter.

Before I knew what was happening, he had clutched me violently by the lapel of my coat. I have forgotten exactly what he said to me, but the gist of it was that he did not like reporters, that there were over one hundred different sorts of potato, and that he might deign to answer me when I could tell him the name of the potatoes that interested my paper most. In some alarm, I suggested that we should continue our conversation in the nearest public-house, and I found the human side of my potato merchant. In five minutes he told me more about potatoes than I had ever heard before—everything, in fact, except the price.

On another occasion I was sent round London to find out what shopkeepers thought of the proposed regulation for the compulsory closing of all shops at 7 p.m., to save lighting. Early closing affected them all intimately and my paper was perfectly willing to use its influence to help them, but I found that it is

## IN THE LONDON OFFICE

never pleasant to mind other people's business. In almost every case the salesman was so much affected that he turned on me as though I were the Government, and argued violently against propositions I had never even thought of putting forward. After a most depressing day I was told abruptly and unpleasantly by a newsagent off Lillie Road, Fulham, to go to hell. The newsagent was an old man, and I noticed he had one gouty foot propped up on a chair. I was tired and cross and the shopkeeper was, as I have said, old and gouty. So I took a mean advantage of him and told him exactly what I thought of him and of his lack of civility.

And during my peroration two large, muscular-looking privates entered the shop, and addressed the old man as "Dad." "Dad" began explaining to his sons that he did not like me and that he liked still less the paper I represented. Things began to look decidedly unpleasant. I edged towards the door and, with the remark that I must get back to my office, I slid into the street. Herbert, I noticed, was looking very vicious, and his younger brother could have killed an ox with his fist. Three or four oxen, I felt at the time. I walked with outward dignity and inward trepidation as far as the corner of the street, and as I turned into Lillie Road I glanced back. Herbert had just stepped out of the shop and his brother was in the doorway. They appeared to be discussing active measures. As soon as I was out of sight I ran as hard as I could up Lillie Road to the nearest omnibus. You might have done the same had you seen Herbert.

Even inside the office, life had its moments of excitement. A messenger boy announced to me one day that a lady was in the waiting room and that the News Editor wanted me to see her. As soon as I entered the room a little old French lady greeted me

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

with her finger to her lips to enjoin silence. She tiptoed across to the door and opened it to make sure nobody was listening, and then asked me if I was the proprietor of the paper, of which I was the junior reporter. When I had explained as tactfully as I could that everybody on the paper except myself was too busy to listen to her she told me she had a great secret, and that she was being followed. And then, suddenly, she began: "Mr. Lloyd George," she said, "is a traitor."

I expressed my interest in the statement.

"M. Clemenceau," she went on, "is a traitor."

In the next few minutes she had given me a list of traitors which included nearly every important statesman or general from Sir Douglas Haig downward. She had absolute proof and was willing to give this proof to the proprietor of the newspaper. Being a young man with a respectable knowledge of French, I should act as interpreter at this all-important interview on condition that I would take my oath never to tell anyone else anything of what passed. In my haste to get the good woman out of the office, I gave her my promise and advised her to write to the proprietor to fix up the time of the interview, knowing well that it would never take place. Whereupon she moved happily towards the door.

At the last moment she turned. "If you are to be our interpreter," she said. "I must ask you one question. What is your religion?"

I told her.

A look of absolute fury came into her face. "Ah, then you, too, are a traitor," she cried, and swept out of the room.

Need I say that when the chance came of going to Paris to follow the Peace Conference of 1919 I jumped at it? I should be present at the making of a new world order. We were going to make the

## IN THE LONDON OFFICE

world fit for democracy, and Great Britain a country fit for heroes to live in. The horizon was bright with hope—so bright that it dazzled and confused and muddled us. Happily for those who were present in Paris, the Conference, whatever its shortcomings, had, like Europe itself, its brighter side.

## THE PEACE OF PARIS

SINCE the past always seems more pleasant than it did when it was the present, one's recollections of the Peace Conference of 1919 are not nearly so bad as they should be. The wearisome searches for news, the necessity for continued alertness in order to beat other correspondents of other newspapers, the unworthy intrigues and jealousies between delegations of different nations—these things are nearly forgotten.

Instead, I remember hurried trips by car to Fontainebleau and Versailles on uneventful days, cheerful companionship, and meals of all sorts. Even official banquets, with one exception, seem attractive through the mist of six years.

One very alarming exception. I was still thin-skinned and timid, and President Wilson was still as popular as could be. The French gave him a magnificent luncheon at the Senate, in a hall where no other foreigner had been entertained for a century.

An invitation for the luncheon arrived for "*M. le Directeur de l'Agence . . .*" and as I was at that moment the only member of the Paris staff of the News Agency with a morning coat and a top hat, I had to go. Arrived in a rattling taxi-cab at the Palais du Luxemburg, I found a large crowd. In vain I wished that I had a moustache or a large stomach or some other physical attribute that would make me look like a person who ought to lunch

## THE PEACE OF PARIS

with President Wilson at the Senate. I was only twenty-four and had no way of hiding the fact.

At the door a man in evening-dress with a big sash, velvet breeches and white stockings (I could not swear to these details as I was in no mood to take them in) refused me admission. I produced my invitation, but he insisted it was a mistake, as no journalists were invited. My nerve began to fail me: I could not turn back, for if I did my Agency would miss my report of speeches that would be of the first importance. And yet if I managed to get inside there might really be some mistake and I might be ignominiously ejected.

Meanwhile, other cars were driving up behind and pompous men inside were fuming in their impatience to tread the red carpet. At last, after consultation with other officials, I was allowed inside. Now, I thought, my troubles were over.

On the contrary, they were just beginning. I found myself at the bottom of an enormous red staircase, far longer, it seemed to me, than Jacob's ladder could have been. On each side of each step stood a Republican Guard with drawn sabre. And grouped round the top of the staircase I saw all, or nearly all, the famous politicians of France. Briand, Loucheur, Ribot, Franklin-Bouillon, I recognized, and the faces of dozens of others were familiar to me from the illustrated papers.

I seemed to hear my knees knocking together, and my teeth chattering. I could scarcely be more than half the age of any other person in the place, and was, therefore, painfully conspicuous. And yet I could not turn round and leave the building, for I should have again to face the unpleasant official and the crowd. I must go through with it. Slowly I began to mount that awful staircase.

As in a dream I heard hurrying steps behind me.



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

Someone else was coming up the stairs. I was saved. I would slow down and let this new guest catch me up so that I should no longer feel so lonely and conspicuous.

The man came level with me, puffing noisily. Now I was all right, I had a companion. I regulated my speed to his and mounted the staircase with him. Only when we were nearly at the top did I glance at him.

Clemenceau, I found, and your humble servant, were going up the stairs together!

Another luncheon comes back to my mind. The late Mr. Massey, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, was a member of an important commission, the activities of which were intriguing the newspaper readers of the whole world. Therefore three of us invited him out to lunch at the *Maison Dufayel*, that enormity and immensity which the French Government had placed at the disposal of the journalists who were attending the Conference. At other tables sat other journalists staring at us with envy; they guessed that we hoped to obtain information they themselves could not obtain. We had arranged beforehand how we were going to work the conversation round to the all-important topic, for there was no time to lose: Mr. Massey had to attend a meeting of his commission at half-past two.

But we had overlooked an all-important point—one of us was Scotch!

Lunch had begun favourably and I was just about to start off with my opening sentence when Mr. Massey said something about the number of Scotsmen in South Island, New Zealand. And that, of course, finished it. In a second our Scotch colleague had asked the New Zealander: "D'ye ken Greenock?" and the two were chatting away about Scotland and Scotsmen for all they were worth. Almost

## THE PEACE OF PARIS

unconsciously they ate their luncheon and drank their wine.

Half-past two came and went. When Mr. Massey's commission had given him up in despair and we had lost all hope of obtaining our piece of news, the two were talking of a place called Broughty Ferry. We left them at it.

And yet another lunch! At a time when the relations between China and Japan were so strained that the Chinese were on the point of leaving Paris in a rage, I walked into a restaurant on the Boulevard des Italiens for a solitary meal. Before I could choose a table a sallow-faced gentleman got up from among a dozen other sallow-faced gentlemen and came across to speak to me. He reminded me that we had met at some function recently and invited me so cordially to join his party that I could not refuse.

Unfortunately Japanese, Chinese and Siamese are to me very much alike, and I was therefore horrified when one of the Orientals asked me what I thought about the Kiao Chow dispute. I replied that journalists were only supposed to reflect opinions and not to express opinions of their own, but my hosts were not to be put off as easily as that.

As an Englishman, which party did I feel was in the right, they asked.

I suggested that the average Englishman had so many worries close at hand that he was rather neglecting Kiao Chow, but they pointed out that I had been telegraphing a great deal about the Chinese Japanese dispute and had therefore learnt enough of the question to be able to form my own judgment on it.

There seemed no escape. I examined my hosts one by one in the hope of finding some clue as to their nationality. The man opposite to me was surely a

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

Jap. In my imagination I saw him reading the poems of Abeno Muneto under a cherry tree in blossom.

I was just preparing in my mind a crushing indictment of Chinese policy when my neighbour sought to encourage me to state my opinion. "The world will soon find that Japan is worse than Germany," he said.

Saved, and just in time! And my sigh of relief was, fortunately, interpreted as a sigh of distress at the alleged iniquities of Japan.

## A BACKWATER OF WAR

It was the summer of 1920, and the Baltic was amazingly attractive. But the Russian army was retreating after reaching the very gates of Warsaw, and my paper was not paying me a useful salary to lie on the sands of Zoppot. And there were persistent reports that thousands of retreating Bolsheviki were swarming over the frontier into East Prussia in search of food and the pleasant monotony of internment. Nobody quite knew where they were, but I must set out in search of them.

My first venture was not a success. I went off to Allenstein, past the old castle of the Knights of the Cross, the cradle of the Hohenzollern family, at Marienburg—surely one of the worst restored castles of Europe! I went by train, and the journey was not the sort of journey one makes for pleasure. At first there were the troubles with the Customs and Passport officials when we entered the Polish "Corridor" from the Free City of Danzig, and when we left the "Corridor" to cross into East Prussia, the home of the Junkers. And in Allenstein and Neidenburg and elsewhere I found an unpleasant system in the hotels. When I had succeeded in finding a room I was asked whether I wanted clean sheets. Of course I said I did, and the sheets were then taken straight off the bed and washed, for the linen cupboards were empty since the war. If the

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

weather was sunny the sheets might be relatively dry by night; if the weather was bad the sheets were still as wet as they could be, for generally there was no fire to dry them. And finally the only trains in the day seemed to leave at about four o'clock in the morning, to stop at every station, and to go to places where I could find no Russians. They were as elusive as the famous Russian troops who were said to have passed through England early in the War. There were wide plains where little boys and girls minded enormous flocks of geese, but I could not expect the Foreign Editor in London to be enthusiastic about them. So I went back as fast as I could to the comfort of dry sheets and a clean bed in Danzig.

Here I learned that a large camp of interned Bolsheviks had been formed at Arys, in the Masurian Lake district, near the Russian frontier. With a Polish officer in "mufti" I set out by car in search of them, and after more mishaps than I had thought could occur to one motor we reached the Polish-East Prussian frontier and worked eastwards as near it as we could.

At Allenstein my Polish officer said very little about his nationality, for the Allied Commission had just left the district to the Germans, who had had an overwhelming majority in the plebiscite, and who were giving the Poles at least as unpleasant a time as the Poles were giving the Germans in the "Corridor." In fact we were only saved from an "incident" with some German troops just outside the town by the welcome and unexpected appearance of a German whom I had known eight years before in Berlin and who was playing in a so-called "international" tennis tournament in Allenstein. As he remarked to me, "the earth ball is so little." So, incidentally, was the tournament, for the only "internationalists" who

## A BACKWATER OF WAR

did not come from Allenstein were three players from Koenigsberg and one from Danzig!

However, we left the plebiscite area and reached the wilder Masurian Lakes district, near which Hindenburg fought his famous battle of Tannenberg, and where we could still trace the trenches and the shell holes of the early days of Armageddon. At places such as Prostken, on the Russo-German frontier, more than half the inhabitants were still living in wooden huts, six years after their homes had been destroyed.

Across the road in the middle of Prostken village was a black and white pole—the frontier between what were once the two largest empires of the Continent. On one side of the pole were a few German sentries, on the other nobody but a little barefoot girl driving some geese along the muddy road. No troops had been seen on the other side for three days, and no one knew if Grajevo, the nearest town, was in the possession of Bolsheviks or Poles.

Here, I thought, was the chance of a grand story. Our German chauffeur refused to cross the frontier, so my Polish companion and I had our passports stamped and set out into the unknown.

The worst of it was that it remained unknown. We could find nothing sensational. It rained steadily, the peasants told us how all their horses had been commandeered and driven across the frontier into Germany by Bolsheviks, Grajevo was depressing and dull, and when, by a stroke of luck, we met three Bolsheviks on horseback, we found them far too busy hurrying towards the safety of Germany to worry more about us than they did about the flocks of geese. Indeed less, for the flock of geese might mean food, and we didn't.

So we took our way sadly back northwards into Germany, and came across a large crowd of

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

Bolsheviks being marched back by German soldiers to the internment camp at Arys. We greeted them as long-lost brothers, so glad were we to find them at last.

Some day the Masurian Lakes will be toured by parties organized by Thomas Cook or Sir Henry Lunn, and I shall do my best to be a member of one of the parties, for these long grey lakes in the middle of the pleasant, undulating stretches of field and pine forest "have a charm that is all their own," to write like a guide book. The road is full of surprises and each hill, or rather mound, gives you an entirely new view. But it was, and possibly still is, inadvisable to pay too much attention to the view, for the unworthy Prussian had hit upon an unpleasant way of avoiding ruts in his roads and of maintaining their good surface. Every fifty yards or so was an enormous stone, now on the right side of the road, now on the left, and only about one yard from the middle. So that you had no chance of driving straight unless you wanted to break your back axle and, probably, your own neck, but were compelled to zig-zag your way all across East Prussia. Every morning I used to see old men putting these stones in their place, and every evening they would come along to roll them back in the gutter for the night. Who but an orderly Prussian, with a tinge of the unpractical from across the neighbouring frontier of Russia, would ever evolve such a scheme?

Another awkward point about motoring in East Prussia was the fact that most of the horses appeared never to have seen a motor-car. Whenever we met a trap, the horse would turn off at right angles and bolt across the fields. There were no hedges, of course, but ditches by the roadside, and the way in which bulky Germans managed to maintain their seats while their traps jolted across these ditches filled me with admiration. The situation was rendered still more

## A BACKWATER OF WAR

difficult by the fact that since the War no German chauffeur would use his brakes with any energy owing to the high cost of rubber tyres and it used to be said that it would be of no use for a hungry chauffeur to run over a chicken at a reasonable speed for by the time his car had come to a standstill and he had got back to the scene of the crime, the chicken would be "high." I imagine that this suggestion was put forward by the same man who started the rumour that the late Herr Ebert, when he became President of the German Republic, had offered a large prize to the first gardener who could grow square peas, as the others rolled off one's knife.

The cost of rubber tyres in Germany was so great, indeed, that most bicycles had none. In a quiet street in Berlin you would suddenly be disturbed by an extraordinary rattling—a Herr Doktor or a messenger boy on his bicycle, with little springs, like miniature sofa springs, fixed at distances of an inch or so from each other all the way round his wheel rims. A noisy, but effective *Ersatz*. And while I am on the subject of *Ersatz* I might recall my astonishment when I discovered that the straps with which one pulls up the windows in the train were made of paper. Not only that, but the seats in the carriages, and the hotel table cloths were also made of paper—woven stuff that looked like "art" canvas. In the best restaurant in Cologne we always had paper towels, and horrible things they were too, although infinitely preferable to *Ersatz* coffee and *Ersatz* mayonnaise.

But all this has little to do with the Bolshevik camp at Arys.

The first evidence we had that we were near the Bolshevik camp was that there were horses everywhere on every road and in every farmyard, hundreds and thousands of them. For there were some fifty thousand Bolsheviks in the internment camp, and at



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

any rate every other Bolshevik had managed to bring a horse, generally a Polish horse, with him across the frontier to sell for food. From all parts of Germany dealers were arriving by dozens to buy up these horses, which were supposed to be returned if their Polish owners ever claimed them, but which, of course, are now busy dragging German carts to market or ploughing German fields.

And then we reached a huge enclosure guarded on the outside by a few German troops and crowded on the inside by Bolsheviks holding out in their hands gold watches, ear-rings, hundred rouble notes and all sorts of odds and ends that they wanted to barter for food. With the best will in the world, the Germans had a very difficult task in catering for an extra, unexpected population of fifty thousand starving men. Every evening hundreds of Bolsheviks managed to escape from the camp in the hope of finding more food in farms and private houses, and every morning they were carefully rounded up by the Germans and marched back to camp again—very carefully indeed for there were cases of spotted typhus and other unpleasant diseases that might spread throughout the countryside.

I applied for permission to enter the camp, and the permission was refused. So I went in without permission, and with the help of two friendly-looking Bolsheviks who sold me hundred rouble Tsarist notes for the extortionate sum of two shillings per hundred roubles. I refused their gold watches and other loot, but obtained one thing I wanted very badly—one of the little red stars that the Bolsheviks used to wear as cap badges. I put the star in my coat pocket and only discovered when I was some thirty miles away that I had a hole in my pocket and that the star had discovered the hole and had dropped out.

The camp was a horrible sight. The wooden huts

## A BACKWATER OF WAR

were packed with a stinking crowd of men in every possible state of raggedness. There were a few grey tunics and a lot of military caps but most of the men wore "mufti," or the rags of "mufti." Some of the officers—who could only be distinguished from the private soldiers by the fact that they were a little less badly-clothed and generally wore leather leggings instead of strips of sacking—had their wives or mistresses with them, and these unfortunate women slopped about in the mud, or stood in queues for bad soup, or crouched round smoky fires, and tried to make the best of a very bad job. Rotten meat lay about outside the huts and there were no sanitary arrangements of any kind as far as I could discover.

The strangest thing about it all was that I could not find a single Bolshevik. I found men with huge masses of hair, bestially-foolish looking peasants, mystics with wide, kindly eyes, men who spoke English and French, boys of fifteen gambling and playing strange games, one or two commissaries who were nearly as smart as pre-war officers—but never a Bolshevik. We questioned scores, and they were scarcely more interested in Lenin or Bolshevism than a British farmer would be in Confucius. Many of them were prisoners or deserters from Deniken's army, most of them had joined the army because they had been told they could loot what they liked from the Poles—and, by heaven, they had! Even a man who talked perfect French and who had a big title to his name seemed to worry little about Lenin and not at all about Trotsky. We could not find one—not even among the Commissaries themselves—who had gone to fight because he believed in Bolshevism, because it was his faith.

I came away from the Bolshevik internment camp at Arys more thankful that I was born British than I had ever been before. I had little time for abstract

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

thanksgiving, however, for there were material considerations in the way. Within forty miles of the camp there was no possibility of finding a bed, so crowded were all the hotels with horse buyers and gold watch fanciers. We had been travelling for three days on end and were tired out, but there was no help for it—we had to motor the whole night long, and arrived at Elbing, with its wonderful old warehouses by the quays, in time for a late breakfast. And back to Danzig, with its clean sheets and bugless mattresses in time for a late lunch at the Deutsches Haus! Once again I decided that Danzig was the nicest town in Europe. And on second thoughts I rather believe I was right.

## ORANGES AND LEMONS

As I came down one day towards Sorrento from a poetical hill-top unpoetically named Telègrafo I passed one of the dark, low caverns that, in Italy, are so often misnamed shops, and when, in my usual indiscreet way, I peered into the blackness, I stopped in astonishment. For there was no blackness—the whole place was ablaze. Against the back wall were thousands and thousands of oranges, and down the centre of the cavern stood a dozen girls packing them into wooden boxes. Later, I knew, the boxes would be taken down by donkeys to the little port of Sorrento, whence they would set out across the Bay of Naples on their dismal northward journey. Somewhere under grey, smoky skies these wonderful balls of fire would be hawked round the streets on barrows to the cry of “ripe and juicy.” Some of them would be eaten by people who had never heard of Sorrento, some would be passed round in bright, luxurious dining-rooms, some would rot and be thrown away on rubbish heaps. How many, or how few, people who saw them would also be able to see the miles of orange and lemon groves, marvellous in the sunshine, stretching their dark foliage along by the blue of the Bay of Naples?

You may visit Pompei for its ruins, but you may also visit it for its view across the valley to Castellamare di Stabia; you may visit Sorrento because Lamartine’s *Graziella* lived and died there, but you may also visit it in order to sit in bowers of wistaria

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

on the very edge of the cliff above the port with its fishing boats, with its water so clear that you can distinguish every stone and every scrap of seaweed; you may visit the white Hôtel della Luna—once a monastery—at Amalfi because Ibsen wrote his “Doll’s House” there, but you may also visit it because you enjoy the view of the dirty little town packed tight between the hills and the Mediterranean. What do literary or historical or any other associations matter so long as you can lie in the grass with the sea a few yards away from you on one side and the orange and lemon trees—often oranges and lemons on the same tree!—a few yards away from you on the other? That the coast road from Sorrento to Amalfi is supposed to be one of the finest pieces of engineering in Europe is not nearly so important as the fact that at one place the terraces of lemon trees go right down to the water’s edge. And a knowledge of Baedeker, or of engineering, or of the history and habits of the Saracens may be pleasant on such a road, but it is also useless in itself, for it cannot convey to you the scent of the orange groves, or of the sea, or of the flowers. Once you go to Capri you no longer wonder that people sometimes miss the boat back to Naples, but you wonder that they ever catch it at all, and such a nasty throbbing little boat it is, too! Fifty per cent. of the inhabitants of Capri must surely be people who have visited the island for one day and have always forgotten to catch the boat back to the mainland.

No words can express the utter “forgetfulness” of Capri and Sorrento and Amalfi. They are crowded with tourists—such places as the Blue Grotto are horrible because of them—and they are only a few hours from the factories and bustle of Naples. But the rest of the world simply does not exist when you are there. Other tourists are so many visitors from

## ORANGES AND LEMONS

another sphere, and not very welcome ones at that. Things like banking accounts and offices and trains are as remote as the Garden of Eden or the Millennium. If people wind up their watches here they do it as a matter of habit—a bad habit which they ought to abandon without delay. There is a village in Cornwall where a large clock is wheeled round once a fortnight or so in order that the villagers may know the time. They have no such uncivilized habits here. If you are tired you stretch yourself out wherever you are, and sleep. If you are hungry—well, surely nobody will say anything if you help yourself in the orange groves? If I had to live on air and water there is no place where I would sooner try the experiment than here. *Some* people work. Down on the little shore a whole family is pulling in an enormous fishing net, and in the orange groves girls are picking oranges into large, shallow baskets. But I have no sympathy for them, for work seems as much a crime here as is idleness in England. Besides, pulling in fishing nets and picking oranges appeal to one more than adding up accounts or beginning letters with “Dear Sir . . .” Until I came here I used to talk of the beauty of labour, but never again, since I have seen the beauty of idleness.

You can see the change in people every day. New tourists arrive, and the first day they rush around with red Baedekers and red faces to see all the sights of the place. The second day their sight-seeing is confined to the morning. The third day you no longer notice them, for they have become entirely lazy, and are therefore at one with the landscape.

All this is exaggerated? But what is there about Naples and its bay to teach me restraint or moderation? Is there moderation about the sunshine or the profusion of flowers? Are not the colours of the

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

oranges and lemons, the sea and the sky so exaggerated that the written word can never be exaggeration in comparison to them? Besides, what does it all matter? Nothing matters. I might be busy with the morning's papers or sending sensational telegrams to London. But I'm not. And if my paper grows tired of my silence and gives me my *congé*, well, *tant pis pour moi*, and I shall get brown and strong scraping up seaweed and other *frutta di mare* from the bottom of the sea to sell to Neapolitan restaurants, or rowing tourists about the bay until they become acclimatized and forget that they wanted to see this church or that village. This book, in time, will follow the oranges of Sorrento on the journey northwards, but it does not matter so very much what happens to it. It is far more important that I should listen to the fishermen's gossip at Marina Grande, or that I should lie face downwards in the flowered, scented grass, gazing southward across the sea towards Africa. For these are the things that count.

## SMUGGLING A TYPEWRITER

IN Düsseldorf I bought a typewriter. Everyone I knew advised me not to, as I should never be able to get it out of the country. Wherever else German officialdom had failed since the War it was adamant as ever in all matters of smuggled goods. And of all the goods that the Germans were anxious to keep in the country, first and foremost came typewriters. No bribery and no flattery would enable one to get a typewriter across the frontier. People came to me with mournful faces and told me mournful tales of how they had tried and failed.

However, the machine was so nice and shiny, and it looked so compact and light, and it was so cheap at the actual rate of exchange that I bought it and arrived with it at Basle. Somehow I would bluff it through. As soon as my trunk was opened the customs official tapped the typewriter case, and asked what it contained. I told him, and, with an energy worthy of a better cause, I bluffed. First, as a journalist, I must always travel with a typewriter; secondly the machine was no longer new, as they could see from the keys; and thirdly my *Ausweis* from the German Foreign Office entitled me to special treatment. The Customs officials crowded round me by dozens. Nothing could be done, some declared; I should have to leave the machine behind me. The signature on the *Ausweis*, others pointed out, was that of so important a *Geheimrat* that an exception must be made in my favour. The debate became angry. I feared I was to be the cause of a new civil war. But before they came to bloodshed,



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

the highest of the officials gave his casting vote in my favour. I was to be allowed to take my typewriter.

Feeling enormously pleased with myself, I moved along to the Swiss Customs bench. I had won a glorious victory.

But the victory was horribly incomplete. The Swiss saw the machine as quickly as the Germans had done, and they would not allow me to bring it into the country. I had not anticipated opposition from this quarter, and my arguments would not be marshalled in time. Besides, as far as I know, nobody has ever succeeded in bribing a Swiss official, so that it was useless to wave five franc notes suggestively in my hand. The Swiss Customs officials were even more numerous than the Germans had been and in this case there was no danger of civil war, for they were united—united against me. I could only take the typewriter into Swiss territory if I paid duty on it.

My arguments were of no avail. The train was filling up, and the engine came puffing in. I had to be in Geneva the same evening and the precious moments were flying. The issue was quite clear. I had to pay duty on the machine or to leave it where it was. Bitterly I cursed myself for buying the wretched thing. What was the good of paying a little money for it in the first place if I had to pay a heavy duty on it before I could get it to my home?

When the last passenger had climbed into the train my resistance gave way. How much, I asked, should I have to pay. While I stood, fingering regretfully two fifty franc notes, the Customs officials carried the machine away and weighed it. A moment later they were back again with their verdict.

I should have to pay, they told me, one franc and twenty centimes!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lest others should think to follow my example I should add that the Swiss Customs laws have since been reformed, and the duty on a pound of lead is no longer the same as that on a pound of ostrich feathers, as I believe was formerly the case.

## MUSSOLINI'S ITALY

THE lounge of the Hôtel Vesuvio was crowded with Fascisti in black shirts, most of whom gazed with awe and reverence at Mussolini, sitting bolt upright in an armchair. Women visitors watched him with devoted admiration, and scattered before him when he jumped to his feet and strode through the hall. One woman asked him for his autograph, but she was English, and the English are no respecters of persons. She knew no better. Outside a guard of honour saluted "Il Duce" as he sprang into his car, and thousands of cheering people followed him to the San Carlo Opera House to hear his speech.

It was just before the so-called October Revolution which brought Mussolini into power, and thirty thousand Fascisti had come together in Naples, for Southern Italy had hitherto shown no more enthusiasm for Fascismo than it does for most other political movements, and must therefore be aroused. By dint of much bluffing and, I fear, some untruths about my political opinions, I presently found myself on the stage perched rather precariously on a chair with a curly-haired Black Shirt from Sicily. Every now and then his enthusiasm at recognizing an acquaintance would upset us both, but, like performing acrobats, we were up on our chair again before anyone else could snatch it from us.

In front of a drop scene from "Madame Butterfly" were rows of Fascisti carrying "gagliardetti" or banners representing different groups from all over

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

Italy. Most of the black banners had skulls and crossbones, or somewhat indecent phrases such as "*Me ne frego*," which no publisher would allow me to translate, embroidered on them. There was an element of comic opera about the whole thing and especially about the more corpulent Fascisti who looked, in their black shirts, like men dressed up as little boys in blouses for a fancy dress ball.

Suddenly there was a fanfare of trumpets, and then dead silence, more complete than I have ever known in any other Italian theatre. With out-thrust chin and scowling brows, Mussolini appeared from "up stage" and strode down to the centre between two hedges of Black Shirts with arms stretched forward in the old Roman salute. While the house roared itself hoarse the famous "Duce" stood motionless and severe, made all-powerful by his iron determination and by the cold steel and castor oil of his followers.

Two or three days later began the "March on Rome," and all Italy was calling on Mussolini to assume the Premiership. Signor Facta, the Prime Minister, declared a state of siege and decided to defend the capital from the tens of thousands of Fascisti who were converging on the city. Barbed wire entanglements which would not have kept back an angry cow were placed at all the gates of Rome, and the Army, instead of firing on the invaders, suggested to them that, as they were ordered to allow nobody to pass them on certain roads, the Fascisti might be kind enough to take other roads into Rome or to walk through the fields for a few hundred yards until they had passed the troops. Why should the Army resist a movement which had their sympathy and which was led by their former comrades-in-arms?

The result was inevitable. Within a few hours

## MUSSOLINI'S ITALY

the declaration of the state of siege, never signed by the King, was withdrawn and by midday the first motor-lorries of Fascisti, waving rifles and flags, drove through the streets to the Chamber of Deputies. In the past, Fascisti deputies had enlivened parliamentary debates by throwing armchairs only at the Socialists, but for the moment not even the Democrats or Liberals felt quite safe, and there was no more resistance at the Chamber than anywhere else. By the afternoon gunsmiths' shops had been broken open, all the Socialists' clubs had been raided and their furniture and documents were being burnt in heaps outside the Fascisti headquarters in the Piazza Barberini. Rome had fallen and Mussolini had been summoned by the King and was on his way to the capital from Milan.

There was not much shooting at night, for no Socialists could be found to shoot at. The offices of some of the papers which had opposed Mussolini were raided and their machines were destroyed. Merchants appeared on the streets with barrows loaded with black material, and peaceful, timid citizens made black shirts for themselves as fast as they could. I went to see one young Fascista deputy and when I put my hand to my hip pocket to get my card case he immediately drew his revolver on me, since when I have given up using a hip pocket at all.

An hour after Mussolini had accepted the Premiership I went to see him at the Hôtel Savoia. Having explained my desire for an interview I was led upstairs by two Fascisti, past several other Fascisti on guard. At length I found "Il Duce" in a dainty Louis XVI. salon, standing with his hand, as usual, in his shirt front and his chin, as usual, thrust out aggressively.

Whenever a comic paper portrays Mussolini it also portrays a diminutive God Almighty beside him,

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

to show the relative importance of the two. If we see Mussolini striding across the attenuated corpse of Liberty, the "Padre Eterno" is jumping on the body with both feet. If Mussolini is shown us on a bicycle he is followed by a small Eternal Father on a small bicycle, with flying robes and damp brow. At one time God Almighty was drawn with white spats, since Mussolini himself is fond of white spats. The idea is not very reverent, but it represents fairly accurately the opinion of Mussolini held possibly by himself and certainly by many thousands of Italians.

How much Mussolini will achieve remains to be seen. It is no longer found necessary on Italian trains to have three men to examine each ticket, which is an outward and visible sign of the improvements he has wrought. And nowadays trains generally arrive punctually, whereas when Princess Mary arrived in Florence on her honeymoon, every Italian paper emphasized the apparently astounding fact that the train had been punctual, had arrived, indeed, in "*perfettissimo orario*." Sunday battles between Fascisti and Socialists are now the exception rather than the rule, and there is much less chaos and corruption in the Government offices. But were this a political book I might call attention to the danger to European peace of so nationalist a movement as Fascismo in a country with no raw materials, with few outlets for emigration and with a population which increases by something like half a million a year. However, it is not a political book, and I therefore confine myself to the suggestion that the person who first proposed the newest crater on Mount Etna should be named after Mussolini had an idea of the fitness of things. "Il Duce" spent his boyhood in his father's smithy and his youth partly in the prisons of three different countries. He has been the editor of the principal Socialist paper and the

## MUSSOLINI'S ITALY

principal nationalist paper. He has not a little of D'Annunzio's dramatic and poetic gift—and without a sense of drama and poetry nobody can do anything in Italy. He is still young and is intensely devoted to his country. *Quo vadis*, Mussolini?

## THE MATTERHORN

IN a way mountain valleys are too much alike. There are the snow peaks, the strip of bare hillside, the belt of forest, the rich pastures, and the little village with its one straggling street. But Zermatt valley is different, for whereas other places have ranges of mountains, more or less distant, Zermatt has the Matterhorn. And the Matterhorn is the only mountain in Switzerland that is incomparably more magnificent than one's imagination had led one to believe.

Some of us find it difficult to grow enthusiastic about mountaineering. At all hours of the day and night there is the heavy tramp of nailed boots in the hotel corridor; parties set out with the rucksacks and ice-axes at a time when we are just beginning to realize how nice bed is; men with strained, red, peeling faces climb to club huts, passing other people, looking far more comfortable, who are walking carefully down the Ryffelalp towards dinner and the hotel orchestra. Climbers, one imagines, must be people of few intellectual resources, who can only prevent themselves from boredom by an excess of violent exercise.

But the Matterhorn convinces one of one's mistake, fires one with ambition. Nearly forty years ago Javelle, that most delightful of Alpinists, and one who could never be accused of a lack of intellectual enjoyment in beauty, grumbled that his beloved mountain was to be fitted out with chains and

## THE MATTERHORN

steps, so that "soon people will climb it as they climb the cathedral towers in certain towns on Bank Holidays." He scarcely exaggerated, for a year or two ago I remember reading that eighty people had climbed the Matterhorn in one day. But nothing short of a funicular could spoil such a mountain. It would be difficult to find anywhere in the world a mass of rock more imposing than this gigantic pyramid, with its wonderful crest of snow and its many glaciers. To all appearances it is within a couple of miles of one's hotel, and its size is only realized when one discovers, through a powerful telescope, a minute wooden cabin, the "Solvay Hut," half-way up the massif, or when one sets out to climb the first bastions of the mountain. The first mile is easy enough—a steady climb up a mountain path through magnificent meadows. Here and there are quaint little villages—Z'mutt, Zum See and Platten—with their chalets perched upon mushroom-like supports. Soon the path becomes steeper, begins to zig-zag up through the spruce forest, up and up until the trees grow thin and one emerges on the first shoulder, a wild, treeless stretch with a small hotel and a dark, little lake, the Lac Noir.

Ahead is the first buttress of the Matterhorn, the Hörnli, and the first climbers' hut. Beyond and above is the mountain itself, to all appearances as distant and remote as it was three hours earlier before one began to climb from Zermatt. One likes to think that the inhabitants of Zermatt never quarrel or become jealous, are never self-centred, for passions and desires for worldly things seem impossible in the presence of that majestic sentinel, the Matterhorn.

But whatever may be said of the inhabitants, there can be no doubt that the visitors show signs of jealousy and dispute. They are to be divided definitely into two classes, those who climb and those who do not.



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

Nearly all of them are English (just as they were when a visitor wrote nearly eighty years ago: "*Cet hôtel serait très confortable et nous y reviendrions avec plaisir s'il s'y trouvait quelques chaises de plus et quelques Anglais de moins*;" the only difference is that there are more than enough chairs since the Seiler family "made" Zermatt), and nearly all of them dress as though they climbed the Monte Rosa every morning in order to get an appetite for lunch. But most of the non-climbers find (as I did) that they have little energy left to reach the summit of the Matterhorn after they have reached the Lac Noir, a mere trifle of 8,400 feet above sea level. They glare jealously at the experts, and the experts glare back contemptuously at them. But, after all, what does it matter? It is possible, if improbable, that the view is better from the summit than from the Lac Noir. Or is it possible? One doubts it. From the Lac Noir the Matterhorn appears the most majestic mountain in Europe; presumably it loses all its magnificence when it lies beneath one's feet.

Herein lies the secret of the attraction of Zermatt. It gives one all the sensations of being a mountaineer without many (or any, if one goes by train up the Gornergrat) of the fatigues that beset more conscientious climbers. That is why Zermatt is crowded by people who look like mountaineers, dress like mountaineers, but are not mountaineers, but merely humble holiday-makers who are contented to climb their odd two or three thousand feet in the finest mountain district of Switzerland.

## RUMANIA

I CROSSED the frontier of Rumania during the night and willed myself to get up early in order to see the Iron Gates. I missed the Iron Gates by a hundred miles or so, but, when I peered out of the window, I found the train crawling slowly past a farm. Gazing at us from the farmyard were a dozen long-haired animals that at first I failed to recognize. I am almost ashamed to confess that for the first few days in Bucharest, when I found life much less unusual and interesting than I had expected, I consoled myself by the recollection that at least the pigs of Rumania were startling, since they all had long, curly hair.

Apart from these pigs, my first impressions of Rumania were disappointing. The gentlemen with prickly faces and shabby fur caps who struggled and squabbled for my luggage at the station were quite as savage-looking as I could desire. But the Athenée Palace Hotel varies only from other first-class hotels in that it is more shabby. And the town of Bucharest has scarcely one interesting or ancient building to show. It lies in the centre of an immense and almost depressingly fertile plain—depressing because it is so easy to gain one's living from it that nobody has much incentive to work. Consequently, everybody is an amateur politician and you have to be just as careful to find out whether a Rumanian belongs to the Liberal or to the Peasant Party as you have

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

when you talk to an American to find out whether he is a Democrat or a Republican.

There are reasons for the shortcomings of Rumania, however, that become very fascinating as soon as you realize their existence. There are few old buildings in the capital, for example, because the country has so frequently been invaded and pillaged that until half a century ago nobody thought it worth while to build for posterity except in the mountains, to which the people fled before the enemy. The farms on the wide Danube plain are battlemented like fortresses and their success has often depended as much on the thickness of their walls as on the agricultural skill of their owners.

The porters at Bucharest station are somewhat savage in their appearance because Rumania is a much newer country than most of us realize. A century ago it was still governed for the Turks by foreign princes, whose sole aim was to squeeze so much out of the Provinces of Moldavia and Walachia that they would be able to fill their own pockets after they had paid their dues to Constantinople. Until sixty years ago gipsy labourers were still bought and sold with each estate like so many head of cattle, and until a much more recent date they feared liberty as something too dangerous and uncertain for people who had grown accustomed to serfdom. Until the Agrarian Reform Law, voted during the War, was put into operation in 1919, less than one per cent. of the population owned forty-nine per cent. of the arable land of former Rumania. In such circumstances, one cannot, or should not, expect to find Bucharest as well organized as London or as smart as Paris, although even before the War Rumania had become one of the richest countries in Europe.

In time, I suppose, the immense wealth of

## RUMANIA

Rumania will be fully developed, and the plain will be covered with gigantic factories, the Carpathians will be dotted with the luxurious villas of millionaires. I am afraid I am one of those reactionary individuals who would wish to postpone this commercial prosperity until I am too old to enjoy the welcome of simple peasants, the amazing hospitality of the "boyars," the legends and superstitions of a people that, despite centuries of invasions and oppression, has clung to the traditions and language of its ancestors in a manner that should put us Western Europeans to shame. The visitor to Bucharest has no rest, for he has to deal with propagandists, as is the case in most European countries. But, much as I hate the very mention of propaganda, the Rumanians have so much in their country to be excited about that I can bear them no ill-will for a rather excessive desire to overload the visitor with documents to prove that no Rumanian ever did, said or thought anything he should not do, say or think. I imagine that every Rumanian has, hung over his bed where he can see it when first he opens his eyes every morning, a simple text: "A visitor's heart is in his stomach." A simple text, but, one must confess it, a true one.

Of the present population of Rumania roughly one quarter consists of people who are not of Rumanian origin and consequently it is only natural that the relations between Rumania and her neighbours are not always extremely cordial. The position is most difficult in Transylvania, since the Hungarians, who are now placed under Rumanian rule, were wont before the War to treat the Rumanians as representatives of a definitely inferior race. Hungary had much of the Germanic respect for a "Staatsbeamter," but, owing to the financial situation, the government officials of Transylvania are under-paid and frequently incompetent, with the result that there is still no love

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

lost between Bucharest and Budapest. There will not be, one imagines, for decades to come.

In the sleeping-car between these two capitals I was bitten on the eyelid by an insect that shall be nameless. I therefore arrived at Cluj, the capital of Transylvania, with a large bandage round my head. When I explained to the Rumanians I had come to meet that I had not been in a motor accident, but merely a *wagon lit*, they hastened to point out that the sleeping-car had come from Hungary. And, when my Hungarian friends in Budapest learned the cause of the black shade that I wore over my left eye, they shrugged their shoulders: "If you *will* travel in Rumania," they asked, "what can you expect?"

I had succeeded in killing the insect, but unfortunately I am not sufficiently expert to tell its nationality. In any case, I avoided offending one party or the other by pointing out that the *Compagnie des Wagons Lits* is international. And nobody minds what you say of internationalism.

## THE BELGIAN COAST

WHO would ever have imagined, six or seven years ago, that the formidable German defences along the Belgian coast would now be so many "attractions" of the seaside resorts? Besides the golf club at Knocke, the tennis tournament at Le Zoute, the Casino at Ostende and the music at each bandstand (generally with the instrumentalists in bowler hats and the conductor in a top hat, to show how far superior they are to the usual municipal orchestras which are clad in uniforms), you have the "Deutschland Batterie" and the "Batterie Wilhelm II" and such attractions as that. Little girls clamber over the dismantled guns near Blankenberghe, and little boys practise jumping from them. *Sic transeunt gloriæ mundi!* And a very good thing too!

These things, in fact, have helped to bring back to the Belgian coast the extraordinary prosperity of the years immediately preceding the War. Ostende has changed for the worse, socially, and the better, morally (especially since the Belgian Government put an end to gambling), and the advantages of the exchange have made it a serious rival for Margate and Southend. The week-end boat in summer is a terrible sight, and the waste-paper thrown away on the famous sea-front should keep half a dozen paper mills busy. But the other resorts are delightful, especially those as far as may be from Ostende.

On the one side is La Panne, still bearing the scars of war with awkward barbed-wire entanglements

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

rotting away among the sand dunes. On the other side are Knocke and Le Zoute, with their charming little cottages perched here and there on the dunes. La Panne can boast that it was the headquarters of the King and Queen of the Belgians during the war, but Le Zoute has the advantage in that to reach it from Ostende the tram takes you past Zeebrugge, where are three *estaminets*—one dedicated “Au Capitaine Fryatt,” one to King George (with “A l’Alliance Franco-Belge” underneath, as a sop to the French *clientèle*), and one named “In the Blocking of the Port.” Thus is the great exploit of the *Vindictive* commemorated!

There are details about the Belgian coast which annoy the visitor. Why, for example, should you be charged a franc, or whatever the fee may be, for your bathe even when, as is usually the case, you undress at home? You cannot dodge the sentries and get into the water without being caught, or if you do you are certain to find a man waiting by your bathing gown with dog-like patience and outstretched hand when you do come out of the sea. The Belgians certainly make the most of their territorial waters. And why should a man blow a ridiculous trumpet after you if you go more than a few feet out of your depth? However, even these annoyances are forgotten in the evening when you crowd out on to the sea-front to dance to the tunes of the barrel organs, or in the afternoon when you race along the flat, hard sand in sand-yachts. For the beach is so wide that at places like Ostende a horse has to drag your bathing-machine down to the water’s edge. Which means that your driver may forget all about you—as mine did—and leave you in your little wooden hut surrounded by the incoming tide and with a train to catch in a quarter of an hour.

Belgium is so conveniently small that you can get

## THE BELGIAN COAST

from Ostende to the morbid old city of Bruges in an hour, or to Brussels in a little over two. If there be a more depressing place than Bruges I do not want to see it. It is even worse than Venice, which has the priceless blessing of sunshine. Its world-famed bells ring out every quarter of an hour, and every time they ring you realize that you are a little nearer your grave. The worst of it is that if you stay there for more than an hour you begin to feel the morbid attraction of the place. Its attraction is unhealthy like the attraction of opium or cocaine. It is not so much Bruges la Morte as Bruges la Mourante. You forget the duties and calls of life in the horrible attraction of watching everything, everybody about you decaying, dying. And the great, undeniable beauty of Bruges is the beauty of death.

Ghent has still the breath of life in it—amongst the beautiful buildings and street corners you find that coarse, full-blooded life of the Flemish masters—and Brussels is, of course, as lively as any town, big or little, could be. But it is not until you come to Antwerp that you realize the effect of surroundings on Rubens and Jordæns and the Breughels. Antwerp has the wealth and picturesqueness of Bremen and Hamburg and Danzig; its people are coarse, kindly, lovers of good food, good drink and good gossip, strong, and still unaffected by the effeminate (and refining) influences of Latin civilization. When you come upon the "Street of the Crooked Elbow," or the "Street of the Blue Breeches," or the "Street of the Hairs," or the "Longue Rue de la Chapelle des Bateliers," or the "Petit Montagne aux Corneilles," you know that you are in a city which has no parallel in the world.

If I wanted to show a newcomer what Belgium is like, I should not send him for hours to the museums of Brussels and Bruges, but I should take him for



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

one afternoon—for preference on a Monday when the people are drinking away their week's pay—to the port of Antwerp. I should show him all the *estaminets*—"In t'Pot," "Bij Julie," "Bij de Norsche Mama," "Café du Robinet," "Champagne Corner," the "English Channel Bucket Shop," and one or two of the Chinese haunts—and by the end of the afternoon he would have learnt more of the virility and colour and energy of the Belgians than ever he could have learnt before, during or after the War, in any other Belgian town. He would go back to the Belgian coast with the realization that the Flemish masters did not paint life of one epoch, but life, at least Belgian life, of all time. Belgium is the battlefield of Europe, but even the battles of the last great War have not destroyed its character.

## BERLIN

WHEN first I went to live in Berlin I was only eighteen, and it seemed to me a wonderful city, for everything was transformed by the alchemy of extreme youth. My father had expressed doubts as to whether I should ever succeed in earning my own living—and I must admit that all the evidence went to support his doubts. He found a post with a City firm for me: I was to look after the firm's foreign correspondence for the princely salary of fifty pounds a year. Instead, through a most unfairlylike fairy godfather, who kept a scholastic agency in Holborn, I obtained a post as English teacher in a Berlin language school at thirty marks a week.

I fear that the power of enjoying life has already so diminished that I should loathe the idea now even of setting foot in that school, still more of setting foot in my lodgings. In the first room I went to I made my first acquaintance with those disgusting little creatures whose population must have increased so appallingly in the chaos caused by the war—bugs. I moved to a little street near the "Port" of Berlin, where I shared an enormous room with a fellow-teacher. He had been teacher in a secondary school in the Midlands, and his political ideas amazed and alarmed me—then, not now, for I have long since adopted most of them myself—as much as the idea of Bolshevism alarmed the rectories of England in 1919. I was jealous of him, for he was more popular than I with the pupils, and he taught them English

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

with a wonderful Lancashire accent which caused those of them who were transferred to me to complain that I, coming from South England, could not speak English properly. But I never met a "whiter" man, nor a more amusing one when he had had even two glasses of beer. He came from a small town, where his sister had just made an excellent match by marrying the local butcher, and where the one policeman was always known by the name of "Sleepy Jesus."

For our room and coffee and rusks in the morning we each paid twenty-three marks a month; we lunched at a *Mittagstisch* in a private house for fifty pfennig—soup, meat, vegetable, sweet, with five pfennig extra for a glass of beer; we supped at Aschinger's on *Bierwürstchen mit Kartoffelsalat* for thirty pfennig. And once or twice a week we would go on the spree—we would adjourn to the Piccadilly Café, now called the Vaterland Café, order a cup of coffee and possibly a liqueur, and sit over our drink until six in the morning. Then we would go home for a wash and a shave, feeling that we had really been "seeing life." In this manner I put aside several pounds to show to my father, but spent them all in three or four days in Hamburg on the homeward journey—and this despite the fact that I stayed in a *Christliches Hospiz*, where a large Bible was placed each evening by my bed and where the hall porter, when I asked him the first evening how I could best amuse myself in Hamburg, gave me a list of churches that had evening services.

The hours at our language school were unpleasant. There would be odd lessons to give during the day, and then four classes, one immediately after the other, every evening from half-past six until half-past ten, after which we were free to go to Aschinger's for our sausages. When we had no lessons we were often put on to do translations, and I suppose I should rejoice when I recollect how I must have hampered

## BERLIN

German trade in England before the War. I remember, for example, making terrible muddles of catalogues sent in by a firm of corset manufacturers and by some makers of medical instruments. On one occasion I spent nearly a week translating a long scheme for constructing the Channel tunnel at very low cost, and I certainly understood less of the technicalities of the scheme even in English than I do of the Einstein theory.

Of the actual lessons, the less said the better. Some pupils with some knowledge of English came for private conversation, and too often my pupil and I would sit facing each other in silence for minutes at a time while I racked my brain in vain for some suitable topic of conversation. And the classes were even worse, for I was young and therefore all the more suitable for "ragging." One of the first things I did on my return to England was to write a letter of humble and heart-felt apology to a former master whose life I had helped to make a torture when I was at school. Even now the casual mention of the General Electric Company puts me into a bad temper for a whole day, for it reminds me only too vividly of the abominable behaviour of some twenty employees of the Allgemeine Elektrizitäts Gesellschaft who formed a class under my control. Control, perhaps, is not quite the right word. My only consolation is the fact that, whatever else they did, those pupils certainly learnt no English.

After some months of this none too pleasant life I nearly, but not quite, obtained what then seemed an excellent post. A certain Baron who, during the war, became one of the most important men in the German Secret Service, wanted an English secretary. Unexpected influence caused me to be selected as a likely candidate, and the great man invited me to meet him at lunch on Sunday at one of the best hotels in Berlin.

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

On Saturday this stupendous event had to be duly celebrated, and a party of us went to a favourite *Automat*, which, as some fortunate people may not know, is a restaurant where you obtain your food and drink by putting pennies in the slot. There were many different kinds of beer and many different kinds of liqueurs. To wish me luck my friends "treated" me all the way down the row, all the way back, and all the way down again. I had not had a really respectable meal for months, but the next morning I could touch none of the delicacies that were put before me by Berlin's most obsequious waiters. My Secret Service Baron was not such a fool as he looked, and he sought his English secretary elsewhere, which did not surprise me when I saw my pale, miserable face reflected in the many mirrors of the hotel. Although Byron insists that "Man, being reasonable, must get drunk," I am not particularly proud of this incident, and only recall it here as an example of the strange chances of human destiny. If my friends had not been so overwhelmingly generous . . .

Berlin had, and still has, one great advantage over most European capitals—the ease with which its citizens can get away from it. In the old days we would make up parties for walking tours in summer and skating trips in winter. We would tramp through the forests, singing sentimental but delightful German folk songs, we would skate thirty miles or more through the loneliness of the Spreewald, we would row all day on the Müggelsee, or eat our thick *Leberwurst* sandwiches in the respectable park of the palace at Potsdam. Berlin, to a boy of eighteen, was certainly a delightful place.

When I went back there in 1920 everything had changed.

After a sleepless night in the train from Basle to

## BERLIN

Frankfurt I discovered, when I changed into the Berlin express, that so few people travelled first-class since the War that there were only two first-class compartments on the whole train and that both of them were full. A careful hunt through the second-class carriages revealed one compartment with two people lying full length along the seats—a large fat man, and a typical young Prussian ex-officer, so *schneidig* and self-contented that one could hardly believe there had been a revolution in Germany, and that His Majesty the Kaiser was generally referred to, at any rate by the Socialists, as “the silly old man in Holland.” The officer grudgingly surrendered half the seat and contented himself with frowning heavily at my volume of Samuel Butler at intervals during the day by way of revenge. Before the train left we had three more people in the carriage, and the fat man had been compelled to assume an upright position, which he never changed but once—to buy a glass of beer at Erfurt—during the whole journey, so that we were all made quite nervous by his terrifying immobility. In the third-class carriages, except in the few compartments reserved for men severely wounded in the War, the corridors were already packed tight with people.

My second shock came when I discovered that, although this was the second best train of the day, there was to be no restaurant car. This is depressing news if you have had no time for breakfast and if your train is only due in Berlin at eight o'clock in the evening. However, the guard said there would be time for lunch at Bebra, where there was a ten minutes' halt, and in the meantime one consoled oneself with cherries or unpleasant beer at every station. It was one of the hottest days of the year, and even bad beer was a relief for the moment.

The sellers of provisions at the station were well worth a study. Their stock consisted of the afore-

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

said beer and cherries, of the inevitable, nasty little biscuits that are called "Keks," of cups of coffee, of one or two communal spoons that were handed round to stir up the saccharine or sugar when there was any. The vendors seldom had any change and, if they had it consisted of fifty or ten pfennig notes from every town except your destination. They offered you the currency of Halle if you were going to Berlin, of Berlin if you were going to Leipzig, and of Frankfurt when you were going away from Frankfurt altogether. Sometimes they gave you one or two stamps that stuck to everything except letters, and at Halle they dealt out cigarettes by way of change instead of fifty pfennig notes. I am now the proud possessor of a collection of some forty notes issued by different towns of Germany and valueless except in their town of issue.

As the train drew near a small town the corridor suddenly filled with people—Bebra, and the crowd determined to make the most of its ten short minutes. With a surprising agility, young and old jumped from the train and bolted for the refreshment room. But what a refreshment room! Stiflingly hot and smelly, with two long tables running down the whole length of the place. And on the tables in front of each chair were a plate of soup, a fried fish with potatoes, and a small plate of stewed cherries. As soon as one had finished one's soup, one thrust the plate aside and started on the fish, as soon as one had finished the fish one started on the cherries, and as soon as one had finished the cherries one thrust the plate aside and shouted in competition with everyone else in the room for beer. Personally, I found the appearance of everything so unpleasant that I preferred to do without any lunch at all.

And then back to the train again for eight more hours of nightmare—more people trooping in at

## BERLIN

every station, the crowded corridors, the hot heavy wind that came across the rolling downs of Goethe's home, the panting, snoring, and growling of overheated, tired, overcrowded people, and, at last, the suburbs of Berlin, of a Berlin so altered since 1914 that it, too, seemed part of a nightmare.

All the tinsel and guilt had worn off. The clean and polished Unter den Linden of before the War was a very different place from a dusty Unter den Linden, with the plaster peeling off the houses and with several hundreds of people sleeping out at night under the trees because they had no other place to sleep. And the Sieges Säule is a hideous squat affair when you have been at war with the people that built it. I found I could not share the disgust of many people for the clean broad streets and bourgeois houses of Charlottenburg, but I hated the Friedrichstrasse as much as a man can hate a street. It had always been a disappointing place, like the Rue de Rivoli in Paris, the Via Nazionale in Rome, or Holborn Viaduct, but since the War it had become hysterical, mean, beastly.

Nearly every other shop was a bar or a "Wein Diele;" outside many of them were announcements of "Nackttänze." It was a place of small Schiebers—all the little, mean people who made money out of the War, or have made it since the War by speculation and profiteering, crowded into the Friedrichstrasse to spend their marks on bad drink in good bottles (1919 wines labelled 1911), on useless odds and ends, or on women. For the Friedrichstrasse was crowded with women and girls. Girls with their hair still down their backs, signing to you, in the hopes of obtaining a good square meal. Many of them were of good family, while some of them did not even need money or food, only excitement. But most of them were war widows who were on the street



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

because they had babies to keep at home. The Friedrichstrasse is symbolical of all the beastliness and glitter and misery that the War has left us, or it was in 1920, and presumably is the same now, only more so. There is a so-called "gay" side to Berlin, but it is difficult to write of it as a "brighter" side.

There was but one way of escaping from the depression caused by the chaos of Berlin. The wiser or more fortunate of us spent as much time as possible outside the city itself, in places like Wannsee or Potsdam, where the misery was less evident.

There are spots on the Havel which seem so remote from all political crises that one might be miles away from the nearest village and centuries away from the most recent War. The only really pleasant recollections one has of Europe after the War are recollections of all too rare moments of forgetfulness. In my own case several of those moments were spent on the forest lakes which surround Berlin.

Other people are equally susceptible to the charms of these lakes, and the famous bathing station at Wannsee is a sight never to be forgotten. All day long in summer the district railway pours forth its thousands of Berliners, with towels and sandwiches, at Wannsee station; all day long thousands of portly Germans splash around, in amazingly small bathing costumes, in the shallows of the lake or lie on the sand for their "Sonnenbad." For a few blessed hours they forget the struggle for existence, the decreasing value of their pensions, the longing for all the cream cakes and sausages and Munich beer of the days before the War. Possibly they may be less pleasant to look at, in this undress state, than, say, the Italians; possibly they should take the responsibilities of their defeat more to heart; possibly they should never indulge in forgetfulness.

I can recall, as I write, two little scenes of 1920.

## BERLIN

In one, a poor woman with a weakly baby goes on her knees with a most embarrassing insistence to show her gratitude for a loaf of white bread and a small pot of honey, which I no longer needed since I was leaving Berlin. In the other, a great, fat, jovial German crawls deeper and deeper into the lake, with his two little fair-haired daughters *à cheval* on his back, screaming with excitement as the water creeps up their fat, brown legs. If only for my own peace of mind, I prefer to think of those two little, healthy girls at Wannsee than of the pale weaklings in Berlin, paying so heavily for the sins of their fathers.

Nobody goes to Berlin without visiting the Hôtel Adlon. The ladies go there for tea in the ugly, station-like hall (with its marble bust of the Kaiser which was never destroyed during the revolution because Lorenz Adlon declared it was a bust of Siegfried); the men go to the Adlon Bar; the profiteers go to both. The Adlon is the international headquarters of the "Schiebers" or war-profiteers. But however hateful the place may be, every journalist must go there because it is the haunt of news. Two-thirds of the telegrams to American newspapers which have been sent from Berlin since the War must surely have had their origin in the Adlon Bar. And the money that has been passed across to the barman since the War would probably suffice to pay for the rebuilding of half the devastated areas of France. As far as I know there is no more to be said in favour of the Adlon Bar than there is of the Friedrichstrasse. Both have been made possible only by war, and one would become a pacifist were it for no other purpose than to make their recurrence impossible or improbable.

## THE LATIN QUARTER

I SUPPOSE it has not been Latin for fifty years or so—immediately before the War it was mainly Scandinavian, Russian, British and American. One is not sure that now it has not ceased to exist altogether, for the last time I went to the Café du Dome I discovered a young English Member of Parliament and the daughter of an English peer sitting at one of its tables. It is true that, at the next table, sat an English correspondent of an American paper who was in Paris on leave from his new home, Moscow, and that there was a fair sprinkling at other tables of those Americans who, by their very excessive rawness and enthusiasm, prove themselves to be art students. But a Member of Parliament and the daughter of an Earl! No, such things should not happen.

I sometimes wonder if the Latin Quarter has ever existed save in the imaginations of the very young. Did Mimi and Little Billee really live in that careless, cheerful poverty which Murger and Puccini and du Maurier have made so attractive? Did any artist ever wear a beard and a black felt hat, a Windsor tie, and baggy, corduroy trousers merely because he was so taken up with his masterpieces that he forgot to shave and had no time to pay attention to his clothes? I have noticed that students in the Latin Quarter turn their heads to catch their reflection in every shop window more than would students anywhere else. I used to myself, so I know!

## THE LATIN QUARTER

But if it was all a pose, it was, at any rate, a very charming pose as anyone who returns to the Boul' Miche now after years of absence will realize. Things are better to-day than they were immediately after the War, when the cafés were closed, and when long-haired students with their broad-brimmed hats and long-stemmed clay pipes were so rare that people would stop to stare at them. They are no longer subjected to *that* impertinent treatment, but even now they are but pale shadows of their pre-war predecessors. There are still the same two enormous *patronnes* at the Restaurant du Furet and they will still kiss you warmly on each cheek when you enter, but most of the diners there are strangers, and each one glares at you as though you were as much of an intruder as you think he is. The Bal Bullier is no longer an army clothing dépôt as it was, I believe, during the War, and the Café d'Harcourt has long since reopened its doors. But the first violinist of the Café Lavenue was killed, fighting in the German Army, and there are now fashionable places where people from the Right Bank come to feed and dance within a hundred yards or so of the Gare Montparnasse. And a Member of Parliament with an Earl's daughter . . . No, such things should not happen! It is chaotic, and since the Latin Quarter was always excessively conservative and traditional in its revolutionary and subversive youth, one realizes how great is the chaos which has engulfed Europe.

The students of the Latin Quarter generally study nothing but "life"; its artists paint pictures which they alone can appreciate; its poets write no better poetry than might be turned out by an assistant in a grocer's shop; its musicians, if they are industrious, end up as respectable business men or as second violins in café orchestras. And yet people grow more sentimental at the mention of the Boulevard

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

St. Michel or the Boulevard Montparnasse than they do at the mention of any other street in Europe. And why?

Perhaps because here you can do exactly what you please, because the more shabby your clothes the more you are respected, because nearly everyone in the Latin Quarter is young. I think youth is at the bottom of it all. Everyone is so bubbling over with ambitions and enthusiasms. Even the cynics are enthusiastically cynical. The disappointments and disillusion of middle age may cast their shadow over the rest of the world but, thank heaven, you see little of them here. An hour on the Boulevard St. Michel is—or was—a voyage round the world in sixty minutes. French students, as dirty as they could make themselves, with their “lady friends” as neat and elegant as their slender purses would allow, Russians, Poles, Italians, grey-trousered and untidy Englishmen, Americans, Scandinavians and hundreds of swarthy people whom one classed vaguely as Southern Europeans before Jugo-Slavia, Czecho-Slovakia and all the rest of them appeared on the map—all these people, bound together by the common bond of youth, used to crowd together in the *Vachette*, or the *Source*, the *Panthéon* or the *Rotonde* to discuss what they would do when they, each in his special sphere, had attained to world fame. And they were too childish and enthusiastic to be obnoxious in their boastings. They were like little boys who proclaim that “dere’s two men in our house, me and Daddy.”

The best thing on the Rive Gauche was, and is, the Jardin du Luxembourg, with its may trees and its pigeons, its statues and its terraces, its merry-go-rounds and its Punch and Judy show. The little girls disobey their *bonnes* and coquette with such little boys as are not too busy launching ships on perilous voyages across the Round Pond. The students and

## THE LATIN QUARTER

artists stroll along the paths and watch the old man who feeds the sparrows or tease the old woman who sells toy balloons at the entrance. I wonder how many little comedies and tragedies have been played out in those gardens. The very sparrows are more noisily cheerful here than anywhere else; the very statues are grey from all the dramas they have seen enacted. Why has no James Barrie told the pathos and love and sentiment of these gardens of youth?

They tell us, and well we know it, that the Latin Quarter is not France, but that is France's misfortune. There can be no place in all the world where there is more cheerful courage, more kindness, more ambition, more love of beauty. . . .

I began by suggesting that Murger and du Maurier had described a *Quartier* that never existed, and here I am being more sentimental and less truthful about it than either of them! But a Member of Parliament and the daughter of an Earl in the Café du Dome. No, such things must not be.

And yet who am I to begrudge a Member of Parliament and the daughter of an Earl the refreshing ideals and enthusiasms of the Rive Gauche?

## FRASCATI

EVERY visitor to Rome goes to Frascati and Tivoli, or if he does not he should do so. But woe to him if he goes when visitors are scarce, for every other inhabitant seems to own a cab, and all the cabs in the place rush at him before he can get out of the tram, and follow him for hundreds of yards like a crowd of pet dogs. Only the descendants of the charioteers of Rome could crowd so many cabs into one narrow road without interlocking them, and thus allowing the tourist to escape. In my own case I surrendered to a cheery fellow who, for not more than twice the legal fare, took me to Tusculum, which I liked so much that I decided to take a villa as near to it as I could.

Ultimately I found one; an ugly, new, white house, too tall and too square. It was even worse inside than out. The bath was so narrow that no man of average breadth could move in it, and no man of decent tastes would ever want to get in it at all; all the water for household purposes had to be pumped up; the drinking water was a sickly yellow; and even before the villa was finished, earwigs, lizards, ants, spiders were already busy hiding or destroying this unusually ugly work of man. Finally, every time I shut a door with the least tinge of impatience the lintel moved a centimetre or so out from the wall and we had to send for a man to plaster it back in its place again. The garden, such as it was, had one tomato plant, millions of weeds and a

## FRASCATI

dozen vines, while the fence was made of cheap and vindictive barbed wire and the gate never shut once since it was made. No words can express the landlord.

But this house was built in the Alban hills, just above Grottaferrata, one of the Castelli Romani, and that made all the difference between it and any other house. Cicero, it is said, had a villa here—Cicero, indeed, is said to have had villas everywhere within fifty miles of Rome—and Cicero was no fool. Behind was the hill surmounted by my ruins of Tusculum—where Cicero had another villa!—to the right was Frascati sprawling its fashionable *villini* up the slope amid the olive orchards and vineyards; below was the wide plain of the Campagna, with the dome of St. Peter's standing out from the faint blocks and towers that are the buildings of Rome, and with the sea a blue streak on the horizon.

In Rome itself you think of the sea as something very far away, for the communications with the coast are abominable, but from the "Castelli Romani"—from Marino or from Frascati, from Castel Gandolfo, perched on the edge of the volcano crater which is now the Lake of Albano, or from Rocca di Papa, clinging to the wooded mountain-side of Monte Cavo—you may even pick out its white sails on a clear morning, and the full moon shows it up in a broad silver streak. And in Rome you have no glow-worms and no fireflies, no grapes, no butterflies, no peaches and no wine—or at least when you have these things they have come down or have been brought down from the "Castelli Romani."

From my study window I could reach out and pick great bunches of white grapes, and my neighbour's peaches hung invitingly over my fence. (I fear that I tore my coat twice on the barbed wire in my efforts to see if they were ripe). I could work all day on the



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

terrace with grasshoppers jumping on the table to study me at close quarters, with big green lizards basking beside me, with the sun on the red and white houses, the grey olives, just dotted with the fresh green of the fruit, the dull yellow glow of the grapes, the dark spires of the cypresses, the red of the earth. Under such a sun everything is vivid of colour and full of life, and you understand for the first time why people talk of places being "bathed in sunshine." "Painted with sunshine" would be better, for the sun gives a kind of varnish to everything, varnishing even the dirt and decay until they do not seem to matter.

The peculiarity of Italy is that, thanks to the sun, there is almost too much vitality in the country. No wonder the population of the country increases by half a million a year! People imagine, for example, that the Boulevard des Italiens, Oxford Street, Broadway or the Friedrichstrasse can be crowded—until they have seen the little town of Frascati on a Sunday evening in the summer!

I used to walk over there at sunset to get my dinner, because the road winds through the woods in a most inviting way and also, it must be confessed, because the wine of the Castelli Romani is better in the restaurant I haunted there than it was when I bought it from a shop. The sky is incredibly red, and the strip of the sea along the horizon, a ribbon of fire. The Campagna is so faint and indistinct in the dusk that it looks for all the world like the sea itself, with the lights of Rome as a fishing fleet riding smoothly at anchor. There is even a lighthouse, which was given to Rome by the Italian citizens of Buenos Ayres and which flashes out the Italian colours of red, white and green to remind the people to be patriotic. As though they needed a reminder! The forest itself grows suddenly dark and the

## FRASCATI

cypresses and stone pines stand out black against the sunset sky in a way that reminds one of the ancient pictures of hell, all in black and scarlet.

And then, quite suddenly, I find myself in the crowd. The woods give way to the villas of Frascati, and to its great open square, now packed with people. It is the hour of the "passeggiata" and when you have said that you have said everything.

Most of the people are young—girls and boys all in their best clothes, their black eyes flashing at each other. Their lips twitch in the faintest of smiles, but they do not talk to each other, for that is against the rules of the "passeggiata." The girls in pink and blue and white, go along together in little groups; the boys, horribly smartly dressed, stand to watch them pass. Motor-cars are dotted about haphazard in the square while their owners drink their "Americani" or eat their ices outside one of the cafés. In and out amongst the people come children or perambulators. On the wide terrace overlooking the Campagna, where electric lights hang from every tree, are women calmly feeding their babies at the breast. Everything is done openly, everything is full of life, brimming over with life, everything is perfectly natural.

And for the first time you realize that the crowds on the opera stage are natural, for if you watch the people for a few moments you realize that on all this terrace there are not, perhaps, more than five hundred people, who parade up and down exactly like the stage "crowd." At one place they all stop, at one place they all turn. In four yards you are out of the crowd, and alone in the night, with only the lights and the buzz of all the busy tongues to remind you it is Sunday evening in Frascati. Either Frascati is opera or opera is life, real life. One cannot help thinking that Mascagni must have deserted his usual restaurant

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

in Rome and have written the "Cavalleria Rusticana" as he watched the crowds here.

Even the brass band, thumping out a military march or growing dreary over "Lucia di Lammermoor" cannot drown the cheery noise of the crowd. It does its best, but the crowd can do better, especially when it has had its share of the wine of the Castelli Romani, than which no wine in the world is more cheering or less easy to transport. (Even in Rome the wine of the Castelli is no longer what it is at Frascati, although it is brought in on the most picturesque carts with vivid, painted hoods: this degeneration is partly due to the heat of the road, the thirstiness of the drivers and the plentifulness of water to fill up the barrels again). So finally the band gives way to fireworks—not fireworks as we know them, with set pieces and all that sort of thing, but fireworks that go off with a bang, terrifying old people and babies and giving girls a good excuse to lean against their adorers for protection. There may be a set piece of sorts, with the national colours of Italy in it somewhere at the end, but even that is certain to rival a battle-ship in action for noise.

After all the uproar the silence of the woods on the way home is so alarming that, despite all my resolutions, fortified by good red wine, I would often arrive back at my ugly little white house bathed in perspiration from the hard work of preventing my legs from breaking into a run.

## THE POLISH "CORRIDOR "

THE Soviet Army was less than thirty miles from Warsaw when I set out in the night express from Danzig having been warned beforehand by a variety of pessimists that the train would probably never reach its destination.

Thorn, I had decided, would be an interesting place at which to leave the train, and I gave the attendant strict instructions to call me a quarter of an hour before we were due to arrive there, at about four in the morning. Despite the insects, I slept like a log, and was only aroused at one fairly large station at which we stopped by the shouts and tramp of many soldiers. Sleepily I lifted the blind to see what was the matter, and found "Torunn" facing me in large letters. I had arrived at Thorn, but in pyjamas instead of my everyday clothes.

Cursing the attendant heartily, I pulled on my trousers, shirt, socks and boots, and tumbled out on to the platform with my typewriter, collar and tie in one hand and my coat, overcoat and suitcase in the other. I was lucky, I considered, to get out of the train with my belongings at all. I cursed myself rather than the attendant when I found the train was not due to leave for another three quarters of an hour, so that I need not have disturbed the inhabitants of Thorn by my *deshabillé*.

Not that they were particularly disturbed, for they had grown used to stranger sights than that. On the morning of my arrival the platform and booking

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

office were literally carpeted with sleeping soldiers, some in khaki, and the others in all sorts of colours, for they had served in the Russian, German, Austrian or French armies before Poland regained her independence. It was literally impossible to leave the station without arousing a dozen men by treading upon them, and my suitcase and typewriter did even more damage than I did myself, so that I very nearly caused a riot, especially as I could talk only German, and German was not particularly popular.

At length, I managed to impress someone with my various permits and he promised to look after my luggage for me. I decided that he might be honest, and went off to the town to find some breakfast.

The peculiarities of the Polish "Corridor" are its abominable flatness, its abominable sandiness, and the fact that the railway stations are always placed as far away from their towns as is possible without encroaching on the territory of the next town. The originators of this beastly habit have been particularly fortunate in the case of Thorn (I refuse to call it by its more complicated Polish name), which stands on the edge of the Vistula. Discovering that the Vistula was one of the largest rivers of Europe, they had the brilliant idea of letting its magnificent waters flow between Thorn town and Thorn station, and of putting the bridge, which is supposed to be one of the longest in Europe, a good half mile away from either of them. There is a steam ferry between the two, the fare for which came to about one-tenth of an English farthing when I was there, but it is not easy to find it. Indeed I lost myself badly, because I did not want to ask my way in German of people who, even if I had found them, would probably not have understood me, and I was overjoyed when I saw in the distance, a signpost. I ran towards it and disappointment. In their haste to get rid of everything German, the

## THE POLISH "CORRIDOR"

Poles had painted out the German names but had not yet replaced them by the Polish ones. These forms of patriotism may be excellent in their way, but I failed to appreciate them at half-past four on a cold morning and an empty stomach. For the time, at any rate, I found it impossible to take seriously a people who had a Minister of Finance named Grabski and who painted up something to do with "Fryzierski" on the windows of their barbers' shops.

In time I reached the town—in time, that is, to discover that I could get nothing to eat before eight o'clock—so I sat down by the waters of the Vistula and cursed my lot and was alternately arrested and released by guards who could not understand why anybody but a spy should sit by the Vistula at five o'clock in the morning. And even when eight o'clock did come I could get little or no breakfast because the town was so excited by rumours that the Soviet troops had reached the Vistula nine miles away. Over my coffee I wrote a relatively short telegram to London which cost about a thousand Polish marks—a lot of money in those days—and which was handed all round the post office as a curiosity.

When I succeeded in discovering an officer who talked French (for the very simple reason that he was actually a French officer attached to the Polish Army) I was advised strongly to go immediately to the Army Headquarters at Graudenz—again I cannot face the Polish name of Gradziadzu. So I went back to the station where, to my horror, I found some hundreds of people waiting to leave Thorn by the first train that went anywhere. For over an hour and a half I waited, wedged tightly in a queue, and watched lice crawl across the neck of the girl immediately in front of me. At length, by dint of waving my many permits I obtained standing room in an officers' carriage and maintained my position,

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

thanks to one officer who talked a little English and who believed he talked a lot. In the distant days of his youth he had had a Scotch governess, but the chief thing he appeared to have remembered of her teaching was her accent. His conversation was a decided trial, but had it not been for him I should undoubtedly have remained at Thorn, so that I was duly grateful and showed my gratitude by complimenting him shamelessly on his knowledge of English. The train went so slowly and my new friend's declarations of friendship at our farewell outside the station at Graudenz lasted so long that it was about seven o'clock before I set out for the Army Headquarters. I had had no lunch and my breakfast seemed very far away.

There were a few trams, but they were so crowded with troops that there was nowhere to hang on to. There were, of course, no cabs or cars, and the Headquarters were on the summit of a hill right outside the town on the farther side. However, as every hotel was crowded with soldiers in uniforms of every shade and shape, I set out on foot with my precious typewriter to find the Chief of Staff who had written to me in Danzig to invite me down. When I finally reached the Headquarters, wearied with want of food and a surfeit of typewriter-carrying, I found that the Chief of Staff was unfindable, and it was the hardest thing in the world to get an authorization for a billet. When I had haunted his ante-room for two days I finally had a talk with him. He began by being genial. "What would you like to see?" he asked.

"I'd like to visit the front," I told him.

"Impossible."

"Well, are there any interesting prison camps in the neighbourhood?"

He told me there was one forty miles away, but

## THE POLISH "CORRIDOR"

that there was no train. When I suggested a motor-car he refused, and in the end I left him in a fit of anger, principally due to the fact that I had been billeted for two nights in the servant's bedroom of a disgusting little hotel where the sheets were filthy, where the slops had not even been emptied since the last occupant's departure, and where bugs attacked me if I went near the bed, and where spiders dropped on me from the ceiling when I tried to make up a bed on the bare boards. The best part about Graudenz was lunch at the chief hotel of the town at a cost of less than threepence at the current rate of exchange. But a threepenny lunch could not compensate me for the utter filth of my room.

I left Graudenz in disgust, and, after spending hours in horrible little station waiting-rooms—each one with large portraits of Pilsudski and of Kosciuszko—I reached Bromberg, now called Bydgoszcz, and escaped from the bugs by a stroke of good luck—my hotel had one bathroom free and every bedroom and sitting-room overcrowded, so I slept in the bath itself while the bugs on the sofa hunted for me unsuccessfully and angrily.

In Bromberg, during the rare intervals when I was free from recruiting sergeants who demanded my papers to make sure that I ought not to be made to "volunteer" for the Polish Army, I searched in vain for people I had known when I lived there twelve years before. They had all gone, for the Polish "Corridor" was the most isolated part of the whole of Poland since it could do no business with anyone at all. All telegraph and telephone communication with Germany had to be in Polish, which meant that there were no business communications at all, and the German, Austrian, and Russian Poles of Poland proper were too busy trying to get on with each other or with the Jews to worry about their new compatriots



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

of the "Corridor," their compatriots who were being brought back wounded to Bromberg and Thorn and whom I used to see passing through the town on their way to the hospital on stretchers in the tramcars. In justice to the Poles, it should be remembered that this was nearly four years ago, and that no other country has been called upon to face such problems as Poland.

I have no idea what were the losses in the Polish-Russian War, but they were certainly extraordinarily light when compared to those of the horrible struggle that had preceded it. The British and American journalists in Warsaw used to say that a battle was considered to have been won by the side whose artillery made most noise, and one colleague told me a little tale which may, or may not, be true. As soon as the Russians had begun to retire from Warsaw, a party of journalists went out to the battlefield where the fighting had been heaviest the day before. There they were met by a Polish colonel who described the fighting to them. "Were the casualties heavy?" asked one. "Everything looks normal." The colonel said that the casualties had been very heavy on the enemy side, and then he appeared lost in thought for a moment, after which he brightened up and said: "Yes, I can take you to see a dead Bolshevik if you like."

They followed him across several fields which showed little or no sign of warfare, and then he began to hunt around in the grass. Suddenly he stopped in the utmost dismay. The dead Bolshevik of whom he had been so proud was already buried!

Even were the story true it would not do away with the fact that the Poles are almost the most charming people in Europe, and almost monstrosly patriotic. The men were badly equipped and fed, but they always sang and never grumbled. They can have few equals.

## THE POLISH "CORRIDOR"

Besides, perhaps the story was not true, for at any rate one of the journalists in Warsaw was not always polite, and also may not always have been truthful. When the Russians were making their sensational retreat from Warsaw, and the Poles were making equally sensational plans of conquest, a number of journalists were received one evening by Prince Sapieha, then Foreign Minister. They were naturally anxious to know what were Poland's minimum terms of peace, but Prince Sapieha was too clever to commit himself to anything definite. At last one journalist grew impatient and asked for the terms outright.

"Might I ask," said Sapieha, "if you have ever bought a horse?"

But he had no time to suggest that a purchaser would never think of mentioning his final price straight away, for the journalist broke in angrily:

"No," he said, "but I've often been sold a pup."

And Prince Sapieha was too polite to show that he understood!

## MURDERED ENGLISH

ENGLISHMEN are supposed, with some justification, to be the world's worst linguists. But however atrocious our accents may be, I cannot think we often perpetrate blunders to equal a notice I found in the lift of an hotel in Ostende, not a hundred yards from the Kursaal. A card announced the presence in the building of a barber, and printed at the bottom of the card were the words "Wasch an Brech Shap." Phonetic spelling with a vengeance!

From Poland, my paper once received a letter, which I transcribe as it stands. I think it is worth it.

"HONORABLE SIR,—Your correspondent Mr. de Bartletts—Bydgoszcz (Poland), Hotel Lengning had on the 20 of august, 20 minutes past 4 in the evening, expediated in the Telegraph-office of this place to your direction a telegramy containing 327 words. The postofficer of this Telegraphe-office had raised for this telegramy only 496 mark and 50 fenig. The taxes amount agains 2256 mark 30 fenig. Consequentli have been raised to little 1759 mark 80 fenig.

"For this defect answered the postofficer. We beg you therefore to instruct Mr. Bartletts, of whose residence at this time we are ignorant and which to find out we no are able, that he compensate this defect."

But more pleasing still is the annual guide of "Les hôteliers français" which chanced to come my way recently. This volume contains particulars of

## MURDERED ENGLISH

I know not how many hotels and a few pages of advertisements and announcements. A very dull book indeed, one might imagine.

But the first page I read gave particulars of the "Official Centres of Aerial Navigation Service," which encouraged me to read on. I was rewarded, for I discovered that there is a "help ground" at Avignon and an "aerial landing hydroavions" at Antibes. There followed a formidable list of "Aerodromes landing harbours of the military service where civil avions can stop down." On the opposite page were particulars of the golf links of France concluding with a note that "These fees are for passenger players," whatever they may be.

After such a beginning, I felt the only thing to do was to put my novel aside and to study "Les Hôtels de la France" with care. I feel rather ashamed of myself for publishing the results of my study on account of a disarming note to the effect that "In publishing the present guide book, the Union still thinks making a useful deed as well to Hotel-keepers as to travellers." But, after all, shame is a passing sentiment, and there is no possible doubt that the book is useful.

For example, having "stopped down from my avion," I naturally seek a temporary home. One hotel attracts me because of its "shaving-room," another because of its "beautiful feast hall 400 guests." An hotel in Chamonix, which is "on the ground of winter sports" advertises "no noise or dust" which might mean "no noise or dust," or, alternatively, "no Norse or Dutch." At Vittel "regimen is served on small tables," and in Corsica one hotel refers to its "smsok room" and another to its "vegetation recommended for hibernants lov. the life family" while yet a third case has a "very aered situation."

A little bewildered by these varied attractions,

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

I turn to a place which I have always considered more English than French—Monte Carlo, an “arts and sports place,” as the guide-book calls it. There is here, I learn, an interesting Thermal Establishment with “shower bathes (spurt or rain), swimming school and manual shampooing.” This is surely the place to visit. But a delightful article on the “States Railways Lines” makes me waver.

“From Paris where its rails reach the very centre of the immense town draining crowds of people through three important stations,” it begins, “the National Railway system spreads itself towards the West in the shape of a compass so widely opened as to form almost one single line which pointing northward . . . and southward . . . encircles nearly the fourth part of France furrowed by ten thousand miles of Railroad. Only two words would be needed to describe exactly this wide estate: the Sea, the Verdure.” There is a brief reference to the ports of France, and, notably, to Cherbourg, “central port of calling fully pushed in the Channel by the point of the Cotentin,” and we then come to the “Sea-landscape the wildest as well as the sweetest . . . quite near also for Central France, with its admirable façade on the infinite; its vivifying salted breeze, an extraordinary ground for excursions and sports.”

But before I have had time to decide in favour of Brittany, with “its reputed sea resorts and sough sea,” I read of the Verdure. “Although there are some groves hilly and wild and even some miniatures of the Swiss Alps it is not through the protuberances of their soil that these provinces force admiration, there are nowhere real mountains, but warmed and watered by the marine climate they are wrapped in a delicious green coat . . . all this green foliage gives the traveller the impression of an endless forest.”

## MURDERED ENGLISH

In view of the season, I turn to particulars of winter sports. There is a useful list of resorts including several where sport can be had when "the snow is sufficiently strong," but rather puzzling is the note: "Of more in Chamonix, Curling and Tailing 'sports'; in Morez, Sail Sleigh. Is employed it is the alone resort where it is used." To my mind, most attractive of all is the announcement that at one winter resort "Apparatuses are brought back by mechanical means."

After so much descriptive work the English translator appears to have lost his head a little, for he becomes almost incoherent. He writes of one hotel that has "no sleeping stair," of an organization that supplies "auxiliary men for Intertaining banketing and wedding feacts," of a paper which is the "proselyting and self defens organ" of the tourist trade, and of another paper which gives each week the "Official Foreigners Lists arfivals and residing in villas, hotels, pensions board: for all the stations resort gradually posted, from the Mediterranean shore up to the Lake Leman."

I am given the opportunity of joining numerous associations, mostly of a very patriotic nature, and of buying numerous presents. One "comity gives his all entirely collaboration for laws and rules concerning the french mercantile fleet, another 'divulgates' information about motoring, another plans tours 'for patriotic an disinterested purpose.'" Of the shops, I am mostly attracted by a toy shop which specializes in "articulated babys dressed or undressed," but I may also visit the "great manufacture of table furnitures et jewellery in silver plate metal."

I have not exhausted all the resources of this wonderful volume, but I fear I shall have exhausted the patience of the printer, who even now, will probably correct many of the errors of his French

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

colleague and thus rob the sketch of any interest it might otherwise have had. But, even these details suffice to make me hesitate to return to France. Supposing I could find no "spurt or rain shower bathes" in Monte Carlo, no "sough sea" in Brittany, and no mechanical means to bring back my "apparatus" when I reached the bottom of the toboggan run. Dare I risk these disappointments?

## ALPENSTOCKS

I ARRIVED one summer's day at Grindelwald and, as it was Sunday, we had to leave the car in the garage until it was allowed out again at six o'clock, for such is the way of the Swiss. We were wearing our Sunday best, and felt rather ashamed of ourselves when we came into the dining-room of the hotel and found everyone else dressed as though they had been climbing the Eiger—rough blouses or shirts, breeches, puttees and heavy mountain boots. Many of the visitors had Rucksacks, like pet dogs, lying at their feet, and when they set off after lunch they all had their terrifying large Alpenstocks towering above their heads.

I was so inspired by the sight of these doughty climbers that I determined to clamber up to the Lower Glacier, clad as I was. My friends preferred the hotel lounge and coffee so I set out alone with my humble walking-stick. After a good lunch I found the going rather steep, and was envying the training and fitness of all the climbers I had seen in the dining-room when I stumbled over something and nearly fell. A very red-faced, over-heated girl withdrew her seven foot of Alpenstock from the path with a gasping apology. After that there was no end to them. On both sides of the path I found these doughty climbers stretched out like wounded after a battle.

I was just thinking to myself what a fine fellow I must be when a little brat of seven or eight swung up



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

past me carrying a bundle of lunch for his father who was on duty at the mouth of the blue cavern that is cut into the glacier ("Admission free. 40 centimes to the keeper," as Baedeker delicately puts it).

However, I could still pride myself on not possessing an Alpenstock.

## “VEDI NAPOLI E POI MUORI”

ALMOST the first thing I saw when I came out of the station on my first visit to Naples was a funeral with a large band, and, it must be confessed, a very bad one, playing a funeral march. I had heard bands play funeral marches before, but there was something different about this one, and after a moment I realized what it was. The funeral march was being trumpeted out almost at the pace of a military march, and the crowds, as soon as they had raised their hats to the coffin, “picked up the step” and fell in behind, as close as they could to the clash of the cymbals. For how could you have a slow lugubrious noise reminding you of death in the city which is more alive than any other city of Europe? If you could take all the poor children from the East End of London—and I wish for their sakes that you could—and could dump them down in one little side street of Naples, I doubt if you would notice that the street was any more crowded than it had been before. At least, that is what it looks like, but instinctively one exaggerates in Naples, just as instinctively one sings “La Tosca” or “Madame Butterfly” to oneself. I remember at school thinking that Tartarin de Tarascon was an impossible sort of fellow, but in Naples there are thousands of him, and if I were there a month I should be another one myself! The old tag, “*Vedi Napoli e poi muori*,” is the most misplaced tag I have ever heard, for Naples is the city of life and not the city of death.

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

The Greeks, when they built their Parthenope and Neapolis here, must surely have had an eye to the happiness of the citizens of to-day, when trains, motor-cars and steamers can take you in one day to the Blue Grotto of Capri; or to Sorrento with its masses of oranges and lemons; or to the top of Mount Vesuvius (armed, of course, with eggs to cook in the earth there while a nasty, dirty old guide shouts imprecations at the volcano until at last the steam rolls away for a moment and allows you, peering down into the crater, to see the flames and masses of rocks that are being hurled out of the cone); or along the wonderful coast road to Amalfi; or to Pompei, where the guardians can tell you, if they will, the most weird, ghostly tales of their experiences on patrol through the streets of the ruined city at night. We owe to the Greeks and the Neapolitans, a great debt of gratitude for the existence of Naples. It is true the Neapolitans generally manage to repay themselves thoroughly by charging us double the price they should charge us on every occasion, but that cannot be helped.

People grumble that Naples is dirty. Of course it is dirty, but then it is almost a city of the Orient, it is more crowded than any other city in Western Europe. And although whole families sleep in one room, there are so many people that it seems they could never all be shut up indoors at the same time and that they must sleep by relays. A sort of Box and Cox city, in fact. In such circumstances, and under such a sun, who would ever take the trouble to be clean? And the Neapolitan songs that are twanged out on the guitar at every restaurant or café you go to are written specially for the foreigners? Well, if they are, little does it matter, for nevertheless they contain all the sunshine and colour and langour of Naples. And if half the population makes its

## “VEDI NAPOLI E POI MUORI”

living by swindling the foreigner it is unfortunate, but it has to be admitted that the swindling is done very picturesquely. And if all the dirt of the streets is tipped over the wall every day into the Bay, the water still remains the clearest water of Europe. The houses are built of soft tufa rock that rots away whenever the sirocco blows, and the streets are paved with great slabs of lava, which may sound interesting on paper but are incredibly bumpy and unpleasant in practice. And if there is a noisier city than Naples in the world I hope I shall never visit it.

And yet, when I see people rushing round Naples between two boats or two trains I am not filled with envy because to-morrow they will dine in some distant palatial hotel or liner. On the contrary, I am filled with an immense pity for them: I would rather sit on a restaurant terrace close down by the sea at Posilipo, and eat oily shellfish soup and fried red mullet and octopus, whatever the consequences, than dine in any hotel or any liner from which I could not see the lights of Sorrento and Castellamare glittering across the Bay of Naples.

In fact, I am so fond of that Bay that it very nearly prevented this book from being written. I had returned to Naples in the early afternoon from a motor trip to Amalfi—not one of those pleasant trips that no good tourist would ever miss, but a stern pursuit for a man whose capture the whole of England was awaiting. We had heard from two excellent sources that the man was staying under a false name at Amalfi until he could slip on some outward-bound liner and escape from his unfortunate creditors. As the car bumped along through the night I seemed to see great headlines of the paper in which I told of my discovery of him. It was to be the biggest “scoop” of my life.

When we reached Amalfi there were other things

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

to think of. It was after one a.m., and not one hotel would open its doors to us. We thumped and shouted and blew the hooter for an hour, but to no purpose. There was nothing for it but to sleep in the car as best we could; four of us with only one rug and summer overcoats. In the morning I was aroused by a thunderstorm and the wet kiss of a passing cow; we knocked up the four hotels in the hopes of finding our man; we so excited the local police that it is still difficult for a tall, fair-haired Englishman to enter their territory without being arrested; we found that there was not a word of truth in the reports that had sent us to Amalfi; and we returned, depressed and tired, to Naples, where I hired a rowing boat and rowed away by myself as hard as I could from the work and noise and newspapers of the city.

It was the last day of February, and as warm as July in England. I had, of course, no bathing costume or towel, but the chance was too good to be missed. I slipped off my clothes and jumped overboard.

When I had realized to the full how pleasant life really can be, I tried to climb back into the boat. It seemed to me to have become an Atlantic liner in height. Jump as I would, I could not pull myself out of the water into safety; no boat is easy to get into when you are all alone, and my Neapolitan boat seemed impossible. I began to grow cold, and wondered pathetically if my paper would give me a nice obituary notice. Sooner or later I should get cramp and drop off. I gazed across the beloved Bay towards Sorrento, and decided I no longer loved the Bay so much. Away in the distance I saw some American girls, passengers from the *George Washington*, paddling about in a little boat. If I could reach them they could help. Was it better to lose my shame or my life? I did not hesitate, but began

## “VEDI NAPOLI E POI MUORI”

pushing my boat over towards them, although I knew I should never reach them in time.

Suddenly I had a shock. Surely, I thought, there were sharks in the Mediterranean? I was seized by panic at the thought. I came round once more to the side of the boat and jumped—jumped wetly but successfully on to my clothes in the bottom of my beloved little boat! The Bay, I decided, was as beautiful as ever.

## TYPES

ONE day in 1920, when the Russian Army was only a few miles distant from the Polish capital, I hastened up to the entrance of the Hôtel Adlon in Berlin to see what was the matter. By the curb stood an enormous touring-car stacked with suitcases with hotel labels from all over the world on them. An American-looking chauffeur sat on the front seat, and a famous American "noospaper man" lounged in the back. On the pavement were a score of other journalists, a few hotel porters and a dense crowd of wondering Germans. John J. Johnson—he has a much more picturesque name than that in reality—was about to motor to Warsaw. Neither he nor his chauffeur could speak a word of German; the Polish capital might already be in Russian hands; it would probably have taken half the time to do the journey by train. But these things did not matter. John J. Johnson had decided to motor to Warsaw—it would sound more stirring in his dispatches to the great American public—so there was nothing more to be said. Besides, his paper had money and liked to spend it, and John J. Johnson, despite a complete lack of political knowledge of any sort, knew a "scoop" when he saw it, and could therefore send in any expense account he liked. I am not sure he did not work for the paper which is reported, when the Australians entered Nazareth during the war, to have headed the news with the words: "Anzacs Capture J.C.'s Home Town."

We said good-bye to him with the dramatic

## TYPES

gestures that he, and the occasion, demanded. He waved to us as the great car drew out from the curb on its long journey. One or two Germans on the pavement lifted their hats obsequiously to the famous man.

Half an hour later I was discussing life and the political situation with half a dozen American colleagues when John J. Johnson and his chauffeur re-entered the Adlon. What had happened, we asked in dismay.

They had come back, they explained rather shame-facedly, to ask the porter the way out of Berlin. They had lost their way in Lichtenberg, a suburb of the city, and could not make anyone understand that they wanted the road to Warsaw.

John J. Johnson was quite touchingly anxious that we should not see him off a second time.

In Zurich once I met a German Jew who wished me to believe he was British, and I mention him as his manner of proving it to me might usefully be studied by other German Jews. Within the first two minutes of his conversation he had informed me he was a British subject and had produced his passport to prove it. He then informed me he was a life member of the Patriotic League of Britons Overseas, and produced a receipt to prove it. He told me how he loathed Jews, thereby hinting that he was one; and how he loathed Germans (speaking with the broadest of German accents all the time), thereby hinting that he was one. He next told me he had letters from the King and the Duke of Connaught, and again his mania for proving his statements gave him away, for the letters he produced were on the line: "I am instructed by — to thank you for the book of poems which he is pleased to accept. (Signed) — Private Secretary."



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

Hoping to make me useful to him, he invited me out to lunch. In a moment of enthusiasm he stopped before a respectable restaurant, but thought worse of it, and led me to a disgusting place "because the cooking was good," which it was not. He asked me if I would have beer or wine, and ordered beer before I had time to open my mouth. He picked his teeth all the time, and cleared up every scrap of food as it had been paid for and therefore could not be wasted. He proved his incompetence as a business man by showing me all his private business letters, and by telling me how the greatest firms of the world wrote to him daily asking him to help them. As he saw the chance of my putting money into his pocket was steadily decreasing, he became more and more anxious to prove what a fine fellow he was. His last words to me were: "Yes, with me King and Empire count far more than personal gain." My German Jew was about as English as was the "Smithson (name changed) Family of Acrobats" whom I saw in the Kursaal at Lucerne. One would think that four or five acrobats could pretend to be of any nationality they liked without being found out, but these, in their desire to show how very English they were, always greeted the funny member who kept popping up at unexpected moments with the cry of: "Here again he is."

I went to lunch with a Cardinal in one of the wonderful old Palazzi of Rome—one of those huge buildings with wide staircases up which you could drive a coach and four (although you would take good care to put your most hated enemy inside the coach for the occasion); with coats of arms over every door; with huge rooms which no number of burning logs and skilfully concealed hot water pipes can keep warm in winter, and no efforts of the southern sun can make

## TYPES

unpleasantly hot in summer; with high, wonderfully painted ceilings and red-tiled floors; with enormous entrances and quiet courtyards.

Down the room where we lunched were two shiny, polished tables, and at each side of the tables were a score of shiny, polished priests, fat, jovial, red-cheeked. I had forgotten such people existed except in pictures on Christmas cards. They were of five or six different nationalities, but they were all alike in cheerfulness and exquisite politeness. They teased each other, it is true, and tried to excite the Abbott, an ardent Italian, by suggesting that the Italian Government should be swept out of the country in order to form new Papal States, but their teasing was a form of caress between old friends. Everybody, from His Eminence downwards, was jovial, kindly, polite, happy and hungry.

I wonder if they would be offended if I suggested that Anatole France must have had them in mind when he created l'Abbé Jérôme Coignard, or Alphonse Daudet, when he wrote "*Les Trois Messes Basses*," and "*L'Elixir du Révérend Père Gaucher*"? I hope not, for I would not offend them for worlds, and yet I liked them so much that I cannot pass them over without a word. And what a pity they could not supply Prime Ministers for the different states of Europe!

The red-faced Englishman attracted my attention by leaning out of the train window in Venice and cursing the porter who had carried his hand luggage for not being content with a tip of half a lira. "If only I could speak their confounded lingo, I'd tell him off in plain English," he declared.

He turned to me for sympathy, but I ventured to suggest that he would never give a penny to an English porter for achieving the apparently impossible

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

in finding two corner seats in the train, and for installing three large suitcases. Reluctantly, and despite the protests of the elder of his two sisters, the red-faced man produced another lira and handed it to the porter, who spat on it for luck and lounged away to tell his colleagues in plain Italian what he thought of Englishmen.

The red-faced man was dressed in "plus fours" of an aggressive pattern; his two sisters were as badly dressed as only Englishwomen can be, were flat-chested and large-footed, wore glasses and had protruding teeth. The younger of the two was foolishly sentimental about everything she saw, although she obviously, and perhaps wisely, preferred animals to human beings. The older sister was harsh and contemptuous. With her fat brother she discussed the excessive charges at the hotel, the badness of everything foreign, the uncivilized habit of not having a joint on Sundays, the immoral way in which Italian girls dressed, the difficulty of getting good bacon for breakfast, and the lack of intelligence shown by the Italians since so many of them did not speak English. There were three Italians in the carriage, of whom at least two obviously understood her every word, but that did not matter to her.

The brother tried to draw me into the conversation by referring to the scandal of making passengers leave the train at Modane for the Customs examination. It was evident that he felt strongly that "these foreigners" should on no account be allowed to ask an Englishman to open his luggage. I agreed with him with reservations, and asked if he believed in Protection or Free Trade. "Protection, of course," he spluttered wrathfully, but could see no reason for my question.

When they left the train at Milan I heard them giving involved instructions to the porter in broken

## TYPES

French spoken with a strong English accent. I suppose it never occurred to these patriots that every traveller abroad is, in his small way, an ambassador of his country; that the principal charm of travelling lies in the fact that all other countries are not exactly as your own, but that each, like the curate's egg, is good in parts; that more harm can be done by one unintelligent and thoughtless tourist than by an unfriendly speech by a Cabinet Minister. Ambassadors can always be recalled. Would that letters of recall could be handed out at Boulogne or Calais to each tourist who, by his clothes or his behaviour, is too obviously harmful to the interests of his country abroad. I am afraid the tourist agencies would lose nearly fifty per cent. of their takings, but other English people would not be compelled at least once a day to blush for their compatriots.

## SINAIA IN WINTER

ONE does not automatically associate Rumania with winter sport, and not many people are likely to travel some 1,600 miles for their skating and ski-ing. But there are some who grow tired of Swiss resorts at which they rediscover—in very different garments, it is true—the same compatriots they had thought to leave in London. If they have the time, the energy and the money, they might well turn their attention to Sinaia and the southern slopes of the Carpathians. Even here, as a matter of fact, there are Englishmen, but they are not of the type of Englishman you meet every day. In one corner of the hotel lounge you will find a man, just back from a two years' trip through South America, explaining some piece of machinery so insignificant that it could almost be placed in his waistcoat pocket, but so important that it saves hundreds of pounds a day in the oilfields. Outside you may see two engineers drawing sections of oil-bearing strata in the snow. On the skating rink is an Anglo-American whose diggers have spent well over a year drilling a well that has reached a depth well over three thousand feet, but that still shows no signs of oil. At any moment the fountain of dark, thick liquid may begin, hurling derricks and machinery into the air as it does so, or it may be that Nature has cheated the geologists and that thousands of pounds and a year of work will have been wasted. Even the Englishmen who have nothing to do with petroleum are, to some extent, business pioneers in a

## SINAIA IN WINTER

new country, and they are good company in consequence.

The other visitors to Sinaia are perhaps less interesting to talk to, but they are more interesting to watch. There are, of course, the wealthy Jews, who are nearly as powerful in Rumania as they are in Poland. There are the Rumanians themselves, not so hospitable as of old, since ninety per cent. or so of their estates was confiscated for the benefit of the peasants, but still cheerful and generous. There are Greeks and Turks, Russians and Bulgarians, and their costumes are even more varied than their nationalities. There are some with rough, workmanlike breeches and elegant city spats; there are others with wonderful pink, orange or purple sweaters and "pull-overs." They alone would suffice to make a visit to Sinaia worth while.

But one does not, or should not, come to Sinaia to stare at other people. There are better things to do. There is a "bob-run" which is improving year by year, and there is a toboggan run which has at any rate the merit of being exciting, since you have to pass at full speed through the massive and narrow entrance arch of the Royal Castle of Pelisor. From the ski-ing point of view Sinaia is too beautiful to be good—it is surrounded by forests, so that most of the ski-runners spend their time on the small slope in front of the Castle, a very over-decorated building that was built for Carmen Sylva, but that reminds one sadly of a Bavarian "Bierhalle." The numerous statues on its terrace are, mercifully, covered with wooden hoardings during the winter, and, in justice to the present King and Queen, it must be pointed out that they themselves prefer to live in a much more modest villa a little farther up the road, but still near enough to the ski-runners to hear their laughter and to watch their tumbles.

Perhaps one of the charms of Sinaia is this feeling

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

of intimacy that exists to a greater degree in Rumania than in any other European monarchy. Even the Royal Palace at Bucharest stands back only a few yards from the busiest part of the busiest street, the Calea Victoriei, and at Sinaia Queen Marie is, as it were, but one of a large party of holiday-makers. If, for example, you are one of the more energetic ski-runners who climb up to the bare slopes above the forest zone, you will probably pass her "Cuib," or rather, the spot where her "Cuib" stood until a few months ago. Here used to be a little summer-house separated from the outer world by a ladder that could be taken up and let down at will, to which the young English princess used to come for solitude in the days before she had grown attached to, and interested in, the country of her adoption; and every peasant for miles around has some friendly souvenir of his King and Queen.

At present Sinaia is the only fashionable Rumanian resort in the Carpathians. But there are other places far better suited for winter sport, and it should not be very long before Rumania, at present still neglected by Dr. Karl Baedeker and his followers, has its tourists and motor chars-à-bancs and long lists of winter sport features. At any rate, the scenery of the Carpathians is so attractive that, for a few brief moments, it can make even a Southern European forget his party politics and the utter unworthiness of his political opponents. There could be no more impressive tribute to beauty.

## “ WIPERS ”

FROM Hill 60 the gaunt ruins of the Cloth Hall and of the Cathedral of Ypres stood out black against the blood red sunset sky. Between the Hill and the crumbling city were fields, where, as the War went on, more and more poppies made splashes of colour like blood amidst the unharvested wheat. They grew near the dug-outs in the railway embankment, near Zillebeke Lake, where you could snatch a hurried bathe on hot summer afternoons before the German shrapnel churned up the water near you and drove you to cover. Before many months had passed the larch woods became a nightmare, for the trees were splintered and ghastly; but in the fields you could lie amongst the corn and poppies and succeed, for a few brief moments, in escaping from the filth of war. You forgot the mud, the lack of sleep, the loathsome, unburied remains of gallant, cheerful youngsters who had fallen in the First Battle of Ypres. The drone of shells flying overhead and the boom as they burst among the humble little houses near the rue de Lille, was almost soothing. Everything was forgotten but the poppies and the wheat, the busy movement of God's insects amongst the grass-stems and the blessed smell of sun-warmed earth. If there be anything to be said in favour of war, it is that its degrading horror heightened the enjoyment of those few moments of forgetfulness in Flanders' fields.

When night came, the fields were haunted and accursed. The poppies were trodden underfoot by tired, overburdened men on their way to the trenches, by tired, overburdened men on their way back to rest for two or three days before they returned to the senseless waiting for death. Men fell in shell-holes



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

and over strands of telephone wire. When someone was hit by a stray bullet the long file of men halted a moment until the stretcher-bearers had been summoned, and then tramped on again hardly wondering whether their companion of a few minutes before would get back to England and cleanliness or whether his body was destined to form one more pitiful mound in the green ramparts of Ypres. No time to worry about anything except food and sleep. No time, thank God—for that way lay madness—to ask oneself why there should be this red harvest of keen young men. At the most, one looked vaguely ahead to the time when it would all be over, when there would be peace and decency again. And then down some narrow communication trench to the miserable dug-outs of the front line, where star shells, mockingly reminiscent of the November rockets of one's childhood, lit up the shell-pitted destruction of the fields of Flanders. At any rate one's children would not have to know all this.

The poppies have lost ground again, for the fields of Flanders are recultivated, and the plough has hidden the shell-holes and trenches. Nieuport is still three-quarters destroyed and barbed wire still straggles over the sand dunes of Coxyde and La Panne, but the houses on the Grande Place of Furnes are rebuilt, and by the end of 1922 quite half the work of Belgian reconstruction had been done.

And done well. You will find nowhere rows of ugly, little houses, all exactly alike, such as one might expect when rebuilding has to be done in such haste. Outside the Menin Gate of Ypres, for example, is the delightful garden city of Ligy, much on the lines of the garden cities of England, by which, indeed, it was inspired. Little steep-roofed Flemish houses stand peacefully round the central square, the

## “ WIPERS ”

*plaine de jeux.* Between Dixmude and Ypres there are dozens of as pleasant little farms as a man could wish to see. Only the shattered poplars by the roadside recall the past.

And Ypres itself has become a city of dust and new bricks and motor-lorries. The Grande Place, of course, remains much as it was at the moment of the Armistice, for the Cloth Hall has been left in majestic ruins as a national monument. There are two wooden buildings misnamed “hotels” and a few sellers of postcards and souvenirs, but through half-closed eyes one can call to mind once more the Grande Place of war time. In the rue de Lille I found again the ruins of the church behind which I sheltered when an aeroplane began bombing on my first day “up the line,” and from which I was driven by shame at the sight of a little girl who passed, whistling, up the street when the noise was at its worst. But most of the other streets were unrecognizable.

I left the car at a place we used to call “Hell Corner,” just at the level crossing, and set off on foot on my pilgrimage to Hill 60. On my right were the remains of the Railway Dug-outs, with the little pond where everyone used to wash his dirty linen. “Transport Farm,” formerly Brigade Headquarters, was rebuilt, and by the second level crossing was the first British cemetery I had seen. An old man pushed a lawn-mower to and fro between the white graves and I stood near the hedge and watched him a while. The sky was blue, with white puffs of smoke like the bursting shells of “Archies,” but the hum of the lawn-mower recalled to me the playing fields of school, on quiet summer afternoons. Perhaps all the young fellows buried beneath the smooth turf dreamt, too, of schooldays, and were content.

Everywhere new houses had sprung up on the ruins of old ones. Klein Zillebeke was a flourishing

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

village, and children from Verbrandenmolen were playing near Blauwport Farm where, for the first time in my life, I had been called upon to bury a fellow soldier and a friend. A signpost announced that a little path to the left, in full view of Hill 60, led down to the Larchwood Dug-outs. Almost unconsciously, I walked along the railway line until I heard a train coming round the bend behind me—what was formerly the only safe way to Hill 60 was now the only dangerous way!

I rambled about on the slopes of the Hill as much as I dared—there were no longer any Germans to “snipe” at one, but most of the land was ploughed and a farmer stood watching me suspiciously from the doorstep of a new farm built where many a time I have spent all night digging support trenches. But the trenches and traverses and dug-outs had gone, and only on the odd pieces of uncultivated land were there rusty helmets and cartridge clips and strands of barbed wire.

On the top of the Hill, which had always been in German hands in my days, stands a tall monument. At its foot were three girls and a man, an ex-officer, who was describing the struggles of ten years ago. The girls smoked cigarettes through long cigarette-holders and laughed and chatted as though someone were pointing out to them the horses in a paddock. Was it for this that hundreds of men died on Hill 60, were left hanging like ghastly scarecrows on the enemy's wire, lay in helpless agony in No Man's Land? I stumbled down the slope of the Hill to the quiet of the Larchwood Cemetery, where I recognized only too many names on the tombstones. For the first time for many months I prayed, prayed that the immense sacrifice had not been made entirely in vain. Away to the west, the sun sank in glory behind the ruined Cloth Hall of “Wipers.”

## A PAPAL ELECTION

IN a book which is written chiefly to interest and to amuse, there is no room for a description of the Lying in State of Pope Benedict XV in St. Peter's, of the thousands of people who crowded in through the great doorways of the Basilica to enjoy the impressive but morbid spectacle of a dead man laid out on a bier, with a Noble Guard standing rigidly at attention at each corner. It is rather the election of the new Pope which draws people from all over Europe to the neighbourhood of that tiny State, the Vatican.

The famous bronze doors to the old building are shut and the priests and other visitors who can convince the picturesque Swiss Guards, in the slashed blue, red and orange uniforms designed by Michelangelo, that they have good reason to enter the Vatican have to climb through a little door within the door—a most awkward little door for elderly priests who are hampered by large stomachs and long *soutanes*. Inside, the Cortile di San Damaso presents an extraordinary sight. Carriages, taxicabs and motor-cars belonging to the Diplomatic Corps drive up at every moment with Cardinals and their attendant priests; near the entrances carpenters are busy erecting an ugly wooden hoarding, with a revolving box by which food, letters and newspapers will be handed into the Vatican when the Cardinals have gone into Conclave; Swiss Guards and Palatine Guards and Noble Guards march to and fro, and Papal Gendarmes want to know

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

—not always in the politest of terms—what your business is.

Upstairs there is complete disorder, or every appearance of it. People are turning out of their first floor apartments for the benefit of the Cardinals during the Conclave. The corridors are full of their furniture going out and of the new furniture coming in. Each Cardinal has a plain iron bed, the simplest of furniture and a plain varnished *prie-Dieu*. Here and there Vatican servants wander about dolefully, wondering whether the new Pope, whoever he may be, will keep them on in his service. The Sistine Chapel is being converted into a council room where the Cardinals will elect the new Pope, and the little metal stove in which the election papers will be burnt to let the outside world know if a Pope has been elected or not is being installed just outside the Chapel door.

Finally the day of the Conclave arrives. A crowd collects in the Via del Fondamento to watch the Cardinals drive in to the Vatican, and each member of the crowd selects his or her particular favourite as the man who will be made Pope, who will never leave the Vatican again. Until the last moment the rooms of the Conclave are crowded with society ladies and men in black coats. Then the Marshal of the Conclave gives the word, the call "Extra Omnes" sounds through the corridors, the visitors are herded out and all entrances to the Vatican are sealed. Henceforward, until the Pope is elected, the only communication with the Cardinals will be by one of the revolving boxes at the main door. Fortunately for the Cardinals, the Conclave seldom lasts more than four days, whereas in 1271 it lasted several months until the people of Viterbo, growing impatient, walled the Cardinals into a building, cut down their provisions, and threatened to take the roof off the

## A PAPAL ELECTION

building. In face of this example of *force majeure* the Cardinals hastened to agree and elected an archdeacon of Liège, Pope Gregory X.

After Conclave has begun, thousands of people crowd along the quays, twice a day, beneath the frowning walls of the Castel Sant' Angelo—walls from which La Tosca could no longer jump into the Tiber, since a wide road now runs between them and the river—to the Piazza San Pietro, and all fix their eyes on a ridiculous little tin chimney that runs up the side of the Sistine Chapel. And twice a day from the little chimney rises a faint column of smoke—white if a Pope has been elected and the ballot papers alone are burnt in the stove, dark if the Cardinals have not yet agreed and damp straw has been put with the ballot papers to warn the spectators outside that they can go home to lunch or dinner and return for the next “sfumata.” What sight could be stranger than this—thousands of people waiting, some of them for hours, on that great square, waiting for a ridiculous wisp of smoke from a ridiculous tin chimney, and fighting and arguing about the colour of the smoke when it does appear? At the election of the successor of Benedict XV the crowds on the Sunday were so dense that it would have been murder to announce the choice of the new Pope, for dozens of people must have been crushed to death in the stampede into St. Peter's to receive the Papal benediction.

So on the Monday morning we had to wait miserably in the rain. But we were rewarded, for the smoke was white. “We have our Pope,” shouted the crowd, and peasants, priests, foreign tourists, Romans, nuns, seminarists, surged up the steps to hear the announcement from the central balcony over the main entrance of the Basilica. The glass doors of the balcony opened and attendants let down over the balustrade a large tapestry with a red velvet border and a coat-of-arms

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

embroidered on a white satin centre—a most annoying article for the special correspondents who were there, for nobody knew what to call it—tapestry, curtain, carpet, sheet? A Cardinal appeared on the balcony, and umbrellas went down with almost military precision? Achille Ratti, he announced, had been elected Pope and had chosen the name of Pius XI. Whereupon a Rome paper whose representative was somewhat deaf, brought out a special edition announcing the election of Tacci, another Cardinal, and foreign correspondents who had left substitutes at the telegraph office to send off the announcement as soon as it was made, found to their horror that they had made the wrong man Pope, while Cardinal Tacci's native village had hung out flags of rejoicing before the mistake was rectified.

We waited for the doors of the Basilica to be opened, but in vain. Was there to be no Papal benediction? Then we noticed a movement among the diplomats and members of the "black" aristocracy on the roof of the Bernini Corridor on one side of the Square. Their place was taken by Papal troops with the Pope's flag. And by degrees we realized that precedent was to be broken, that the new Pope had decided to appear on the outer balcony to give his benediction to the crowds on the Square, the first time since the loss of the Temporal Power in 1870 that a Pope had shown himself outside his immediate kingdom, the Vatican. A few minutes later the Papal band on the roof of the Bernini Corridor struck up the Pope's march, the Italian troops on the Piazza presented arms, and the thousands of people stood bareheaded in the rain while the new Sovereign came on to the balcony to bless them. Although the Popes still refuse to recognize the Kings of Italy and still consider themselves the lawful monarchs, Pius XI had taken the first public step towards reconciliation, and

## A PAPAL ELECTION

the soldiers of the King of Italy had presented arms to the rival ruler.

The coronation of Pope Pius XI was, to me at any rate, far less stirring. I was already in a bad temper at having to get up at six in the morning and put on full evening dress, and when we reached the Basilica the crowd was depressingly thick. We had tickets giving us the right to circulate where we liked in St. Peter's, so that we were able to escape the crowd and enter by the door reserved for diplomats. After we had passed the Italian military police who guarded each entrance under the command of a commissary of Police, I happened to glance round and saw a colleague arguing fiercely because he was refused admission. In a foolish moment I thought I might do a good action, so I went back and explained to the commissary that my colleague was a journalist, and deserved admission. Who was I, demanded the commissary, and when I told him, he declared I had no right to enter by that door. While I was replying my colleague slipped unnoticed into the Basilica, but the commissary, probably as depressed by early rising as I was, insisted that I must leave the building. Who lost his temper first I do not know, but I know very well that he suddenly summoned three military policemen who seized hold of me and threw me out, evening dress and bad temper and all.

Never have I been filled with such unchristian hatred. Fuming with rage, I explained the case to a Senator who happened to be standing near, and he spoke to the commissary with such force that he came up to me and apologized and offered to let me pass. But I was too angry, and I told him plainly that, come what might, I would never enter his beastly door. Then I strode away.

But as soon as I saw the crowds outside the other entrances I repented bitterly. There was no hope of



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

entering the Basilica. And what would happen if I could not send a first-hand account to my paper? Why had I lost my temper? Why had I tried to help a friend? Why had I got up at six in the morning and put on evening clothes? Presently I had an idea. I would try to get into the Basilica through the Vatican, and I walked round to the back entrance. The Swiss Guards would not let me pass. I knew a few words of Schweizer Deutsch, and used them. The sentry was delighted, and still more delighted when he found I knew his native village. We talked for some minutes about the lake, with the cherry blossom in the orchards above it, and then I promised to come and talk to him again another time, and he allowed me to pass on my way unhindered into the Vatican.

Thus I reached the Cortile San Damaso, where the Cardinals were climbing out of their cars to robe for the ceremony. But I did not know the way into St. Peter's. I attempted to follow the Cardinals, but a man stopped me and told me I could not enter that way. So I went and hid behind a pillar until he had had time to forget about me, then I slipped out quickly when one of the Italian Cardinals got out of his car with his assistants, and marched boldly up the stairs as though I had been attached to the Cardinal for years. The only person who noticed me was the Cardinal himself, who looked mildly astonished at seeing the number of his assistants increased, but who, doubtless, had other things to think about. Five minutes later I was in St. Peter's, in a crowd of people who ate sandwiches, mopped their faces, chatted, climbed on to the tombs and altars and hung their hats on the altar candles. I trod on people's toes for nearly an hour in a vain endeavour to see what was going on, and then made my way out of the Basilica.

On the Piazza San Pietro were thousands of people awaiting the Papal Benediction. In company with

## 'A PAPAL ELECTION

several others in evening dress I sat at the foot of one of the columns of the gallery, lazing in the sunshine. At length streams of people poured out of St. Peter's and the Pope, wearing his famous tiara, appeared again on the outer balcony. The crowds on the Piazza cheered and waved coloured slips of paper—the precious tickets for which they had conspired and bribed, and which, owing to the breakdown in the arrangements, they had not been able to use. Many of the people had come from Milan or farther, had travelled in discomfort all night, had got up at ridiculously early hours, had paid a fortnight's wages for their tickets. But when the Pope blessed them they went off home quite contented. Great is the power of the Vatican!

## BELLAGIO

BENEATH my window are the piazza and the little pier, near which gather old, tanned men with white sailor blouses and scarlet sashes. From time to time tourists with guide-books arrive from the steamers and are immediately seized upon. Within a few minutes, rowing-boats with white awnings and red cushions are creeping across the lake from Bellagio to the Villa Carlotta or to any other place which may attract the foreigner. Between the visits of the steamers Bellagio lies in the sunshine, delightfully lazy and peaceful—only the faint lapping of the water against the boats, the sound of church bells from across the lake, the voices of the fisherman, a snatch of song from a girl washing clothes near the pier. The tourists, for the most part, only see Bellagio bustling here and there in their honour, selling silks and tortoiseshell and post cards, offering cab-drives and trips in motor-boats. Their holiday is no holiday. They always have a steamer to catch, a present to buy, a post card to write. They do not see, from their bedroom windows, the painted cargo-boats unloading blocks of ice, stacks of wood, baskets of fruit or barrels of wine early in the morning, when the lake is still soft with haze.

One watches the tourists with pity. A holiday should be a rest, not a rush. One should lie in the woods of the Villa Serbelloni and follow the slow passing of the day on the three branches of the lake; one should idle in a rowing-boat, moving the oars just enough to maintain the sound of gentle and restful

## BELLAGIO

lapping against the wood; one should take the afternoon siesta amid the roses and magnolias, or surrounded by the bright little flowers in the grass beneath the olive trees.

And yet, alas, contentment is not of this world. When I came to Bellagio I decided to renounce my office life in London in order to become a white-bloused sailor, rowing tourists about Lake Como, in the hope of being as hale and cheerful at seventy as is the old man who rows with me each morning. Then I went to the Villa Carlotta, the sequestered property of the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen (who deserved to have it sequestered, since he lived in it only for one month in twelve). And I decided to renounce my work as a white-bloused sailor in order to become one of the eight gardeners who labour amongst the palms and tree ferns, the azaleas and magnolias, the maples and camellias, the orchids and eucalyptus, the cacti and the great python-like roots of wistaria that crush the pines and cypresses to death. One day in eight I should conduct visitors round the gardens, and I would make them see the beauty of this rhododendron and that cypress, of these ferns and those roses; and on the other days I should work alone in some part of the grounds with the flowers around me and the lake beneath me, thanking God each hour that I had such work to do.

But yesterday I decided to renounce my work as a gardener at the Villa Carlotta in order to become a gardener at the Villa Serbelloni. I would rake the paths through the woods that crown the hill from which you have one of the most beautiful views in Europe; I would watch the stone barges, with the breeze just filling their red-brown sails, creeping down towards the city of Como; I would sweep up the petals of the roses and wistaria, and tend the orange and lemon trees; and when darkness came I would

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

walk down to one of the little cavern-like *osterie* of Bellagio for my wine and my talk.

And while I try to decide my future, the days speed by and my future decides itself. Within a week I shall have packed my bags and shall be waiting on the pier beneath my own window for the steamer to take me towards Menaggio, Lugano, Basle and London. Almost I begin to envy the tourists who stay in no place long enough to love it, who work so much on holiday that the end of holidays comes as something of a relief, who only know Bellagio as a place to buy tortoiseshell from Naples, silk from Como, shawls from Venice, leather work from Florence, and inlaid wooden boxes that are made by the sailors in winter time when there are no visitors to be rowed about the lake. Perhaps, after all, Baedekers bring happiness, and rapid travel a comforting feeling of resignation when holidays are over.

## THE ISER ROLLING RAPIDLY

WHATEVER their other failings, the dull poets whose works one was compelled to learn by heart at school have sometimes the merit of accuracy. How rapidly, for example, the Iser flows I was able to judge for myself one hot Sunday afternoon when it was still high from the spring rains. I had gone for a walk with another Englishman in the famous English Garden in Munich, and the river looked delightfully cool. I tempted my friend, and he tempted me. We had no bathing costumes, but we found a secluded spot to undress. Unfortunately we had reckoned without the current, and I have never wished so much that I had taken the words of our national poets more to heart than I did on that afternoon when we had to hurry an odd quarter of a mile upstream to our clothes, across all the sharp, pointed stones in Germany and in full view of the shocked inhabitants of Munich taking their Sunday afternoon walk. Had we been clothed the onlookers would doubtless have guessed our nationality, and that is the only thing I have ever been able to find in favour of our unfortunate lack of garments.

## MURDER IN BESSARABIA

THE Bessarabian adopts a subtle form of murder. He kills you by kindness. Personally I only spent two days in that much disputed province and have now recovered sufficiently to tell the tale. It is a difficult tale to tell, since one might so easily conclude from it that I am an important individual, or wish to be taken for one. Therefore I would hasten to point out that practically all foreigners who visit Bessarabia run the same risks of death as I did.

With two Rumanian friends I arrived at Kishinew—or Chişinau, as it is called in Rumanian—on a cold, bright morning. The station was decorated with French and Rumanian flags and a number of officers and portly civilians hurried up and down the train in search of somebody. While my friends went to find out what arrangements had been made for rooms, since the Foreign Office in Bucharest had thought it advisable to telegraph notice of our arrival, I joined in the search for this elusive celebrity. He had still not been discovered when we hired an ancient carriage to drive to our hotel. But, before we could leave, an officer, with despair on his face and a clanking sabre at his side, came up to us to ask if I was the Baron Berthelet. "Bartlett, and not a Baron," I replied, whereupon we were requested to give up our cab in order to occupy the one and only motor-car. As we drove in it through the streets the inhabitants stopped and stared. Some of them indeed took off their hats, so impressed were they by the sight of us. I felt myself growing inch by inch.

## MURDER IN BESSARABIA

Luncheon at Kishinew was an affair that one cannot forget. In the Foreign Office telegram my Christian name had been converted into "Baron," and the local authorities had concluded in consequence that I must be French. Hence the flags at the station and the humble apologies of the gentleman who had ordered them to be put there. Apparently he imagined I was vastly offended at being given another nationality and he made good his error by instructing the orchestra to play "Tipperary," so that the guests might show their respect for England by jumping to their feet at the first strains of what they thought was the British National Anthem. The luncheon was no light affair and we were hurried off before the end of it to visit what we had not already seen of the town.

Kishinew has the typical wide Russian streets and an extremely interesting Oriental bazaar. Seventy per cent. of the people are Jews and they have a quaint old quarter which I should have loved to visit. But our car hurried through it at a dangerous speed and my attention was distracted from these miseries of Kishinew. Instead I was called upon to admire the water tower, a few modern American-looking buildings and the lunatic asylum. Nothing that was more than twenty years old appeared to have merit in the eyes of the Prefect of Police.

I do not know how many miles we covered in the few brief hours we spent in and near Bessarabia's capital. We visited villages—quaint little villages, where most of the houses are painted half pink and half blue, where the peasants came out with salt and a loaf of bread as tokens of welcome. Bishops and priests showed us round their respective churches and my crowning experience was a visit to the Jewish Synagogue, where a special service was said in my honour. "Said" is not the proper word, for at times the gentleman who officiated pleaded to God in a fine



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

tenor voice and a manner which would soften the heart of the cruellest of deities, and at times he boomed forth what sounded like threats and made gestures that were certainly intimidating, even if they were not meant to be. And, rather to my alarm, the moments when he mentioned my name were always those when he sounded most angry with Heaven. At my side stood my *aide-de-camp*—for I had not only an *aide-de-camp*, but also a soldier who stood, heaven alone knows why, at the door of my room in the hotel day and night. My *aide-de-camp* nudged me disrespectfully in the ribs and whispered to me of the terrible things that would befall me as a result of this service in the Synagogue. And on two or three occasions I offended our excellent friends by forgetting where I was and taking off my hat.

But Kishinew was nothing when compared with Tighina, a little town on the River Dniester, the frontier between Rumania and Russia. We arrived there in the special carriage belonging to the general commanding the troops in Bessarabia and here again we were met by all the big-wigs of the locality. The streets of Tighina are even broader than those of Kishinew, but they are not broad enough for a chauffeur who has to avoid all the pigs and geese that stroll through them. Furthermore, they are not paved and, as I was given the place of honour on the back seat, I was seriously frightened lest I should bounce out of the car altogether. Had I run all the way I should have arrived at our destination infinitely less heated and wearied.

The Dniester, although one learns its name in school geography books, is an insignificant and uninspiring little river. From the summit of an old castle that was built by the Genovese in the days of their power we gazed across the river to Soviet Russia. To those of us who can meet Bolshevik delegates and

## MURDER IN BESSARABIA

diplomats almost any day of the week in the streets of London the appearance of the land to the east of the Dniester is not particularly thrilling. To me it looked exactly like the land to the west of the Dniester, but I did not like to say so. To the Rumanians it is a land sinister and awe-inspiring. We stood for a long while gazing at the bleak countryside, since it was pointed out to us that, if we did so, we might see a Bolshevik walking along a road in the distance. A strange idea to come all the way from Bucharest in order to see a Russian peasant going home to his dinner!

The Rumanian takes his Bolshevik so seriously because he has every reason to do so. Russia seized Bessarabia a century ago, mainly because Bessarabia is on the road to Constantinople, and any Russian Government, be it Red or White, longs for a better port than Odessa or Archangel. Forty-five per cent. of the population, even according to the Russian figures of 1897, is Rumanian, while only eight per cent. is Russian. The Tsars did all they could to destroy the Rumanian character of Bessarabia and they even went to the extent of importing foreign colonists, so that you may to this day find villages called Paris or Leipzig, where only French or German is spoken. But, despite these efforts, the Rumanian, or Moldavian, population has retained its nationality and, as soon as the Tsardom was overthrown, Bessarabia voted, first its autonomy, and then its reunion with the Kingdom of Rumania. Recently Moscow has changed its tactics. Since in Bessarabia the Moldavian element, that is to say, the Rumanian element, obviously predominates, it is useless to continue the pretence that the province is Russian. There are to the east of the Dniester a few groups of Rumanians and the Russians have therefore set up a so-called Moldavian Soviet Republic, in the hope that

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

the Moldavians of Rumania may be attracted by alluring, but probably untrue, stories of the prosperity enjoyed by their compatriots in Russia. Occasionally they vary their propaganda by military raids into Rumanian territory. The result of their policy is that Rumania lives in a state of perpetual uneasiness and, until some definite and sensible agreement is reached between Russia and Rumania as regards the future of Bessarabia, there will remain the danger of war along the Dniester.

But all this has nothing to do with my own experiences at Tighina. I was taken to a large building and given a large luncheon. On the one side of me sat the Mayor, on the other the Prefect of Police, and before me was a glass of vodka which, like the widow's cruse, was never empty, despite my quite gallant efforts to make it so. Most of the guests at luncheon could only talk Russian and Rumanian, but, what with vodka and the excellent wine of Bessarabia, language limitations presented no difficulties. The Prefect at every moment filled my glass and signalled more or less covertly to some other guest to drink my health. I would then, for fear of offending my hosts, be compelled to empty my glass, whereupon the Prefect would fill it up again. Protests were of no avail and I was assured I need feel no alarm, since I at any rate could walk, whereas an Allied diplomat who had been there a few weeks before had had to be carried to his train.

Thanks to the assiduity of the Prefect, I even stood on my chair and made a speech in what I imagined was Rumanian, but was more probably Italian, on Rumania and world peace. My only excuse for the speech is the conviction, based on experience, that refusal to empty my glass would have deeply offended my hosts. The train back to Kishinew was delayed a quarter of an hour so that

## MURDER IN BESSARABIA

I might catch it and the other travellers were waiting in anger on the platform to see who it was who so long delayed their departure. My private carriage was at the farther end of what seemed to me an amazingly long train, but, with a determination worthy of a better cause, I walked in what I still believe was a perfectly straight line along the platform to it, and, in the rare intervals when I stirred in my sleep on the way back to Bucharest, it was only—so my friends tell me—to bring down curses, quite benevolently, on the head of the hospitable Prefect. Bessarabia is certainly no place for a person who dreams of using water except for washing in.

## MY MOTOR-CAR

THE trains from Rome to the Alban Hills have an awkward habit of stopping for lack of electric current, and even at the best of times they take over an hour to cover the fifteen miles that lie between Frascati and the Eternal City. As I was living at Grottaferrata, near Frascati, and had to be in Rome every day, I decided to buy a car.

I bought it on the day the King opened Parliament. A motor engineer had pronounced favourably upon it, and I went in all confidence to fetch it at the garage after lunch to drive it home to my expectant family. Owing to the State function I was clad in a morning coat that was made for my wedding and was now decidedly small for me, and my feet were encased, as the saying is, in patent leather boots. An unusual costume for summer motoring in Rome, but I had only just over twelve miles to go. I should be home in half an hour.

My "Baby Peugeot"—in defence of the Peugeot cars I should add that it was roughly tenth-hand—crawled along the Via Appia Nuova creditably enough, but already my enthusiasm was ebbing, for I had not hitherto realized that there is no rule of the road in Italy. Or rather, there are several. In some towns you keep to the left and in others to the right. In the country you keep to the right, but it is a wise man who knows where town ends and country begins. And the wine carts that had always delighted me by their picturesqueness now disgusted me by clinging

## MY MOTOR-CAR

tenaciously to the middle of the road. My three-note horn—rather like that on German Imperial motor-cars before the War, designed specially so that the guard on the Unter den Linden should turn out whenever a member of the Royal Family went past—my three-note horn had no effect whatever on most of the drivers, who were curled up comfortably asleep beneath their vivid-painted sun hoods. On the few it succeeded in disturbing, the effect was so unpleasant that I soon gave up using it altogether.

Nobody knows what dust is until he goes south of Florence. I refuse to believe that even in North Africa is there so much dust as on that part of the road where the water in the radiator first began to boil. As I waited there in the full glare of the sun for the water to grow cool enough for me to proceed, lorry after lorry rushed past me. Indeed I became seriously alarmed lest my Baby Peugeot, lost in the dust, should be run into by one of these rattling monsters. I almost wish it had been.

The car never stopped in one of the rare patches of shade. I learnt for the first time—and have never forgotten—how much black absorbs the heat, how unpleasant patent leather can be. When I had rattled along to the foot of the Alban Hills the car refused to climb. Once, during the War, I ran short of petrol in a car and climbed the hill backwards so that every drop of petrol should run down into the carburettor—a terrible affair for, while progressing in this rather undignified and retrograde manner, I met a company of men with a sergeant-major. Not one officer amongst them, so the whole company had to march to attention to salute me and my retrograde motor-car. But the Baby Peugeot was as reluctant to climb backwards as forwards. It must have taken me nearly an hour to reach the level of my villa, and I have never seen my method of motoring adopted by

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

anyone else. I would start up the engine and begin to climb. As soon as the engine showed signs of extreme exhaustion, I would jump out, with an agility that did no good to my morning coat, and would run by the side of the car, steering as I ran. The method may be confidently recommended to persons who wish to grow thin.

For three weeks the "Baby Peugeot" haunted me. Every time I bought petrol I bought water too, and the carburettor struck work, every time I went out I collected a strange and expensive variety of nails. I had no garage for the car and it lived in my vineyard, a source of ecstatic joy to my son and heir, an eyesore to me. In the end it took the place of the chairs in the nursery, and my son would sit in it for hours in the vineyard imagining he was driving a magnificent motor-car through I know not what fairyland. Certainly the car was not meant for the bumpy roads of everyday life.

On the few occasions when I appeared with my purchase in Rome I got myself into trouble. When my friends collected to see me off on my homeward run the "Baby Peugeot" would enwrap them in thick, oily smoke; in the narrowest of Rome's many narrow streets the engine would stop dead; my good reputation, so carefully built up, disappeared in a day, for people would never believe I was not actually trying to run them over; the water was always so hot that I could not drive, even in the worst traffic, except on "top," and when I drove on "top" the engine, naturally enough, stopped on each of the frequent occasions when I had to brake suddenly.

The brighter side of that chaotic affair was the dinner of rejoicing I gave on the night I sold my "Baby Peugeot" for two thirds of the price I had paid for it.

As for registering myself as its proprietor and

## MY MOTOR-CAR

obtaining a driving licence, it was not to be thought of. The formalities were so formidable that it would take me a hundred pages or so to describe even the few I did go through, and I was told that I had not, as it were, got beyond the *kors d'œuvres*.

In one or two passages in this book I appear to suggest that the Italian is capable of theft and fraud. He is, and I am not, I believe, the first person to say so, but I cannot over-emphasize the fact that he does not look on theft and fraud from the same angle as we do. They are proofs of intelligence, and the man who is weak enough to be deceived rather deserves his troubles. I never felt that I deserved mine, but I suppose I did. And in any case his faults as much as his qualities make the Italian peasant the most attractive peasant in Europe.

Swiss honesty, for example, becomes positively depressing after a few months in a country where you bring your bicycle with you into the shop every time you go to buy a box of matches, as you do in Italy. The Italian, though dishonest, is generous; the Swiss is so honest that he seldom worries about generosity.

A well-known journalist was seen walking along the Quai du Mont Blanc in Geneva one night with a policeman. He explained to a group of colleagues whom he met that he had placed the policeman under arrest. The policeman seemed of another opinion, since he had been called to the Kursaal to take charge of my acquaintance, who refused to pay an exaggerated bill. My acquaintance appeared embarrassed with his policeman, so he took him across the bridge in a taxicab, and left him in it while he went into his hotel to buy a drink and to think things over. He watched the taxicab through the window of the bar, and every time the policeman tried to come out the journalist waved his walking-stick so threateningly that the policeman shrank back again.



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

In the end wise counsels prevailed. The policeman was given thirty-five francs to settle the Kursaal bill of thirty-three, and he was allowed to drive back in the taxi to the other side of the river, since he feared trouble if he were seen on the wrong bank of the Rhône. The affair was, as the Germans say, *erledigt*, finished. Or so, at least, we thought.

But we were wrong. The next afternoon the policeman returned with one franc fifty change. The remaining fifty centimes, he explained, he had had to pay on the journalist's cloak-room ticket.

And what are you to do with people of such depressing honesty?

## RECONSTRUCTING ITALY

FEW things in after-war Europe are so depressing as the devastated areas, with their ruined homes and, almost worse, their broken trees thrusting up gaunt, accusing arms towards the sky. Even the comfortable travellers in the Paris-Amsterdam express must feel a thrill of horror when they pass the ruins and wooden huts and ugly new red buildings of St. Quentin and Feignies and Mons.

The devastated areas of Italy are the most hopeful I know, for, partly because the belt of destruction is much narrower than in France and Belgium, the signs of war are being so quickly hidden. Almost the most depressing feature about the region, for those of us who hoped that the late War had left such a mark on the world that there would be no more wars, is the speed with which the evidences of destruction are being wiped out. One fears that people may forget. . . .

The beginning of my tour round the devastated areas of Italy was arranged so as to coincide with the International Samples Fair at Padua—so few years ago the home of the Italian General Headquarters and the destination of so many Austrian bombs. No tour of mine will ever coincide with the opening day of a Fair again. Villas that had housed generals and war correspondents were, it is true, gay with flags in honour of the young Prince of Piedmont, who had come to open the Fair. But the crowd and the heat! There was nothing about the Fair to remind

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

one of war—little indeed in Padua itself except for one ruined house and a small hole in the bronze door of the cathedral of Sant' Antonio—but there was more than enough struggle. I know not how many thousands of people, in their stiffest collars and blackest coats, struggled and fought to get near the Prince, as hot and unhappy as anybody else except myself, who, urged on by an unwonted patriotism, rushed to and fro in the sun, searching vainly among the German exhibits for one single sample of British industry. As soon as I had reached the iced strawberry stage of the lunch that followed, and was beginning to think that Padua had its advantages after all, I was rushed off and whirled away along a hot, dusty road to Venice, where honeymoon couples lolled about in gondolas on strong-smelling canals and tourists stood in blazing sunshine on the Piazza San Marco feeding overfed pigeons. Nothing here to remind you of war.

But an hour over excellent roads brought us to the land of wooden huts. The large, level plain was strangely reminiscent of Belgium, for in the early morning light the mountains to the north were so faint that one could believe them clouds. Near every mass of rubble was a wooden hut, and, as a rule, a half-built house. Here and there cattle looked out from the windows of ruined farms, and at one place was a tree with a cross-bar from which the Austrians used to hang the Czecho-Slovak "deserters"—but not once was there a sign of a trench or of a shell-hole. The whole plain was rich in new crops and cattle.

An hour and a half brought us to the Bonifiche di Cavazuccherina. For years before the War, devoted engineers had been at work to drain the huge malarial marshes that lie to the north-east of Venice. Even as it is, ninety-nine inhabitants in the district got

## RECONSTRUCTING ITALY

of every hundred suffer from malaria, and skilled labourers and foremen brought from other districts sometimes have to be changed three or four times a year and sent away to recover. Slowly, by building up the canal banks so as to leave no ridges of mud just above the surface—for it is in these ridges of mud that the mosquitoes are hatched—and by arrangements to keep the water in motion, the danger is being stamped out, and the Bonifiche are turning the marsh into the best grain-producing land in Italy. All the drainage work was stopped by the War, and when the Austrians, who had occupied the marshes for the year following on the disaster of Caporetto, were driven out in October, 1918, they destroyed the machinery of 70 Bonifiche. Thus, when the Italians returned, they discovered 75,000 acres, won back from the marshes after years of work, lying desolate under water.

In six months the Bonifica of Cavazuccherina, a pile of ruins, had been rebuilt and was draining the land at the rate of 18,800 litres a second, lifting the water a distance of 13 feet. Even in this district, which so short a time ago was all under water, the new houses are springing up by the side of the old. Beyond the miles and miles of rusty barbed wire that lie tangled up by the roadside, there is little to remind one of war. The town of San Donà, which was terribly damaged during the War, has recovered. There is a model hospital, a new church, and a new town hall, and the population of the town has sprung from 11,000 to 14,000. Above all, the houses are being well-built, and here, as in Belgium, but not, unfortunately, in France, there are no nasty little London-like houses, all on the same pattern.

From San Donà we went to Treviso, a delightful little town nestling on its two rivers, forgetting the 1,526 bombs that were dropped on it, but remembering with the greatest affection the British troops—and

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

especially the "Scotties"—whose headquarters were here. And then along Napoleon's wonderful road northwards to the Ponte di Priula, the scene of one of the most desperate struggles in the battle of the Piave—here a swift mountain stream with a broad stony bed that hinted at its force in the time of rains, very different from the slow river we had found it near the Bonifiche the day before. At the side of the road were cement "pill-boxes" and dug-outs, rapidly being covered by undergrowth, and ahead lay the long, low mound of the Montello, its soil rendered sacred to Englishmen by the English blood that has been shed there. Behind the Montello again stood the massive Monte Grappa and Monte Tomba, their sides scarred with roads built during the War.

A few minutes after leaving the Piave at Ponte Priula we drove into Nervesa, a town of new houses and scaffolding, with a brand new Town Hall. At the end of the War, Nervesa was more utterly destroyed than any other town on the Italian front, for a battle raged in and about it for fifteen days in the last Austrian effort of 1918. Here, indeed, the tide turned. For two days Italians and Austrians lay facing each other, separated only by the railway line, and then the Italians drove the enemy back across the Piave towards the utter defeat of Vittorio Veneto. Within a few miles of this little town died Italians, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Americans, Austrians and Germans. Here the Italian soldiers made untold efforts at night to save the grain in No Man's Land—they gathered a harvest of 20,000 quintals to help in the struggle against starvation. And yet now Nervesa is a flourishing place—with some of its houses still to be rebuilt, it is true, but with a great irrigation scheme which will lead to the construction of two important power stations. A mile or two away on the road to the Montello, by a ruined farm house that must have given shelter to hundreds of British soldiers, is now a

## RECONSTRUCTING ITALY

new, white "Albergo dello Storico Montello" where the workmen and peasants collect of an evening to talk over the days when war swept like a plague over their land.

From Nervesa the road winds upwards through the mountain valleys, past the ruins of Quero and Feltre to Belluno and a whole district that escaped destruction, since the Italians and, in their turn, the Austrians, had to evacuate it so quickly that there was practically no shelling. And then down southwards again to S. Croce, Vittorio Veneto, and Conegliano. In October, 1918, this valley was crowded with fleeing Austrians, without rifles and without equipment; to-day, it is the centre of one of the biggest hydro-electric schemes of the country which should save Italy the cost of a million tons of coal a year.

From Vittorio Veneto, the scene of Italy's great victory, we went towards the scene of her great defeat, Caporetto. We stood on the tower of the Castle of Udine, where the municipal authorities had stood at the end of October, 1917, gazing eastwards in the hope that some of the Italian troops who streamed towards the city in disorder would rally and make an attempt to save it. Vain hopes, for the Italians fled on, and when all chance of resistance was gone the inhabitants of Udine joined in the stream of refugees. Many of them could not cross the Tagliamento, as the bridges had been blown up, and were forced to return to their homes under the Austrian occupation, but even so the population of Udine dropped from about 40,000 to little more than 4,000, and there were 8,000 refugees from Udine in Florence alone, where they had their own newspapers and whither most of the treasures of the Castle Museum were brought. Those which there was no time to save found their way to the museums of Austria, and when I visited the Castle I found the place littered with pictures that had just come home from Vienna. As I stood on the

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

Castle tower, one of the old men who had wept on that October evening, powerless to do anything to save Italy from defeat, told me hopefully of the scheme for using the "white coal" of the Tagliamento. The river which once loomed so important in the War *communiqués* would shortly be producing some 50,000 h.p. for the benefit of Italian industries. He would have given me more details had we not been interrupted by my hat blowing off and sailing gently down to the town like the hat of Edgar Allan Poe's hero, Hans Pfall.

From Udine tower one can see where the old Austrian frontier used to run through the low foothills to the east. A few hours through badly devastated country brought us to Gorizia, decorated to celebrate the Festa dello Statuto. We left the important gentlemen in top hats and white cotton gloves as soon as we could, and drove to the Carso. I had always imagined nothing could be more terrible to fight over than the mud of Belgium, until I had seen the Carso. A bleak ridge of rocks, stretching away to Trieste and beyond, reminding one of the more desolate parts of Dartmoor, except that it is not softened by the heather and the vegetation of a damp, warm climate. Absolutely waterless in summer, so that the soldiers lay there day after day in the most terrible sunshine, in trenches that were only a foot or two in depth, exposed to shellfire whose effectiveness was increased an hundredfold by the rock splinters, in face of an enemy who had had time to blast proper trenches in the rock—so that the Italians lay there and literally died of thirst. And in winter the situation was hardly improved, for the wind and the rain brought misery with them. The water collected in the shallow trenches and the cold meant death for hundreds of men accustomed to warmer climates. Every peak and every valley of this country has won to immortality—Ronchi, from which came the first

## RECONSTRUCTING ITALY

brigade of grenadiers to join D'Annunzio in his Fiume adventure, the *massif* of the Hermada which was the last great bulwark between the Italians and Trieste, Doberdò whence you can look down at the sea, with Trieste far away in the distance, the Timava torrent in which nobody knows how many Italian soldiers were drowned (with an impressive monument above it to recall to passers-by the sufferings of the Duke of Aosta's Third Army), S. Michele, the key to Gorizia, and the Vallone, where the dead were to be counted in thousands.

From the Redipuglia Cemetery on the Carso, with its 30,000 dead, we came down by the sea to Trieste, clean and cheerful in the sunshine, but then in danger of starvation because her prosperity depended so much on a settled, peaceful Europe, and Europe knew no settlement or peace. From Trieste we turned back by sea to Monfalcone shipyard.

There is perhaps not much poetry in a modern shipyard as a rule, but Monfalcone is an epic. It was utterly destroyed in the War—indeed, severe hand-to-hand fighting took place actually in the ruins of its sheds and shops. When the War began a passenger steamer of 17,000 tons was ready for launching, and several other vessels including three cruisers for the Chinese Government were on the stocks. All this shipping was sunk and all the machinery was thrown into the basins. Before the War the shipyard employed 2,800 men. When I visited it in the summer of 1921 recovery had been so remarkable that there were 3,600 men employed and it was expected to increase this figure to 5,000. In six months five vessels totalling 45,000 tons had been launched. But the impressive part about it all was that, on the ruins of the War, a model shipyard was being built. The workmen had little three-roomed houses, each with a little garden. They had a large bathing establishment where they could have hot baths for a few



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

centimes a day, reading-rooms, a mess-room to accommodate 1,600 workers at a time, a steam laundry, and, lastly, a theatre at which some of the best companies of Italy have given performances. At least 120,000 tons of shipping, including vessels of 18,000 tons, can be built here practically on the battlefield, and the spirit of comradeship that was engendered on the battlefield has been maintained in the depressing struggle for prosperity and peace.

Of a crowded week there are three things I shall never forget. The first is this shipyard of Monfalcone. The second is the way in which I flooded my room in the Hôtel Savoia at Trieste—owing to an awkward custom of the management of turning off the water in the evening when you want it and turning it on again at about five in the morning, when you certainly do not want it, least of all to a depth of three inches in your bedroom with the gentleman from the room below thumping angrily on the door. The third is the overwhelming hospitality of the Three Venices.

Our tour lasted seven days, with twelve banquets, and two ordinary meals. A banquet equals, presumably, three ordinary meals. Thirty-eight meals in seven days, with a *vermouth d'onore* in every single village, however small and however ruined, are more than enough to keep body and soul together. At one village I tried to refuse a drink and thereby made a life-long enemy of the Mayor. As in German students' duels, no flinching was allowed. On the whole I can look back on that tour and feel I did my duty as Nelson expected me to do it.

## DANZIG

I WAS aroused in my sleeper on my way to Danzig by a terrible uproar in the next compartment. The train had arrived at the German frontier station for the Polish "Corridor"—that strip of territory by which the peacemakers of Paris gave Poland an outlet on the sea, and which divides Germany in two—and I gathered that the German officials were having trouble with a Russian who wanted to take more than two thousand marks out of the country. Personally, I had in my pocket the pleasant little sum of 25,000 marks, for who could tell when I should be able to get more money with the Bolsheviks only a few miles from Warsaw? I could not afford to leave them behind. So, very quietly, I took 24,000 marks—in those days something like £200—out of my pocket and hid them right underneath my mattress. When the official came to me he would find me in possession of a thousand marks or so and would go away satisfied.

The quarrel in the next compartment dragged on, for the Russian was doing all he could to get his 7,000 marks through. I had been travelling for two days and was tired out. I fell asleep.

I awoke a few miles from Danzig, for the German official, on being shown my English passport by the sleeping-car attendant, had decided that I must not be disturbed. My Russian neighbour had disappeared. I obtained a cup of coffee from the attendant and clambered contentedly out of the train at Danzig. There was some advantage in being English, even at Schniedemühl, or whatever the

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

frontier station had been. It was pleasant to arrive in Danzig with about £200 safe and sound in one's pocket.

It was only then that I remembered. I turned and rushed back to the train just as it was about to move out of the station. From under the mattress I snatched my precious 24,000 marks! In the few seconds that elapsed before I found them, my gratitude to the German official who had feared to arouse me at Schneidemühl disappeared entirely. Why had the idiot not made me show my pocket case? Then at least I should not have run the risk of giving the sleeping-car attendant a £200 tip.

Every street in Danzig reminds one of lost splendour and wealth; every corner in the port makes one realize what a flourishing future may lie before the city under the ægis of the League of Nations. One only hopes that its new prosperity will not destroy the artistic evidences of the prosperity of three hundred years ago.

Since 1793, when Danzig became part of Germany after nearly three hundred years of independence and of adventure such as few towns in the world can boast—fought for by the Poles, the Knights of the Cross, the Russians, the Swedes, the French and the Prussians—the development of the port has been hindered on every possible occasion, for the very simple reason that it was against the interests of Germany to help the development of the Russian and Polish Hinterland. Only during the War did Danzig come into its own, and many a submarine was built there to harry the Allies' shipping. The harbour, once it has been developed, as it can be at no enormous expense, seeing that it contains miles of wharfage where large vessels can unload, will be one of the most valuable in the world.

But it will be many years before Danzig can recover the importance she once held. She was one

## DANZIG

of the smaller but not one of the least influential, of the Hanseatic towns, and there is scarcely a city in Europe where the treasures of former generations have been so carefully preserved. The Town Hall would keep a student of history interested for days, not only on account of the wonderful collection of pictures and art treasures that has been assembled there, but also because the influences of so many different peoples are visible. English influence is very apparent—just behind the Town Hall there is still the “English Haus” which was, so to speak, the British Chamber of Commerce there. The whole of the ground floor of the Town Hall is most unexpectedly tiled with old Delft tiles. Sweden, and even Switzerland, can be recognized, and Flemish painters seem to have been nearly as common in Danzig as they were in Flanders. The warehouses on the quays by the river Mottlau are far too beautiful to be described, and one feels sure that they are still filled with wonderful silks and satins, guarded by the ghosts of men who sailed the Spanish Main in great three-deckers.

But most interesting of all is the Street of the Women, where Seton Merriman’s “Barlasch of the Guard” lived, and where are still the *Beischläge* or terraces on which the burghers of Danzig would sit of a summer evening. Only in Elbing have I seen similar terraces, and even there they are not nearly so beautiful. Whereas now people make their neighbours envious by the luxury of their motor-cars, in those days they hired sculptors to make everyone covetous of the carved walls to their terraces and the strange beasts that crouched on each side of the steps up to them.

And the cathedral, too, must be remembered, for its nave is one of the largest in Europe, and it is one of the few Lutheran churches where the Catholic ornaments—and even the vestments of the priests—have been maintained intact. It contains a Memling

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

painting which is well worth seeing, even if you do not appreciate Memlings, on account of its history and its strange, elongated sinners falling headfirst into the fires of Hell. It was captured by a Danzig ship in 1473 when it was being brought from Bruges to England. The owners, rich merchants from Florence, naturally protested, and, in consequence, the Pope threatened Danzig with excommunication if the picture were not returned. But Danzig thought more of the picture than of the Pope, and there it remained until Napoleon took it to Paris in 1807. But the Danzigers were fortunate, and when peace was made with France in 1816 the painting came back to Danzig, where it now hangs in the cathedral as a lasting proof that piracy sometimes pays. Danzig is full of paintings by artists who possessed a sense of humour—notably from Anton Möller, whose picture of the Town Councillors (who had paid him less than he felt he should have received) in a boat on the way to Hell is worthy of an article to itself. They protested, and ordered him to include himself among the passengers. He did so, but he also drew his *fiancée*, in the form of an angel, stretching out hands to save him, and him alone, from torment.

Even in the summer of 1920 this old city was one of the most charming in Europe, although it was crammed with Jewish refugees fleeing from the Bolshevik advance on Warsaw. I described them as unfortunate Polish refugees in the most stirring telegrams to my paper, only discovering days later that they were Jews, hastening from the country in which they had been born lest they should be forced to fight for it! I have never sympathized with anti-Semites and many of my friends are Jews, but the sight of a Jewish family from Galicia eating soft-boiled eggs for breakfast in a dirty hotel might turn one against almost any town in the world. Yes, almost any town—but not Danzig. We cannot explain why some

## DANZIG

people attract us and others repel us, so I cannot explain why I love Danzig and hate, say, Calais or Koenigsberg.

Possibly the charm of Danzig lies in its nearness to Zoppot, once the Margate of Eastern Europe, but now a delightful resort. In summer on the pier you still have to zig-zag slowly through the crowd of Germans, Jews, Russians and Poles, but they are all so red and brown and healthy, which is a pleasant change in this wrecked and hungry Europe. So many of them are there that, if you are wise, you dine in Zoppot and dance at the Metropol-Diele until the first train in the morning. In that way, and in that way alone, are you assured of a seat in the Danzig train.

For my own selfish sake I cannot help hoping the prosperity of Danzig will not come too quickly. The Free City is so obviously exactly the right size as it is, and I want no more people in Zoppot than are to be found there now. It is too pleasant a place to become once again the Margate of Eastern Europe.

## STRASBOURG AND METZ

THOUSANDS of English-speaking people must travel annually to Basle and Ostende, but not more than twenty or thirty in every thousand ever think of stopping on the way to visit Strasbourg, the capital of Alsace, or Metz, the capital of Lorraine. Wearied with travelling all day, they glance out of the train windows indifferently at the two stations, and forget the romance that lies beyond the station walls. Various places claim the doubtful honour of being the cockpit of Europe, but few other places have changed hands so frequently that the grandmothers talk good French and bad German, the mothers good German and no French, and the children good French and little German. Women who stumbled westwards beside the last French troops during the retreat of 1871, who found courage to turn back and face the terrifying unknown of the German invasion in the belief that their compatriots would return to rescue them in a month or two, have had to wait just forty-eight years to see the return of the French troops. Men who wore the German uniform a few years ago now wear the blue and red of France.

Metz is decidedly the less interesting of the two cities. It contains twenty-one military barracks: of its streets a dozen at least are named after French generals, and its inevitable Rue de la Paix—for every French town has its Rue de la Paix—is one of the shortest and most insignificant of all its streets. Metz has little to do with peace. It is nearly as crowded with troops as it was before 1914, although

## STRASBOURG AND METZ

these troops now wear different coloured uniforms. It has, however, to redeem it, its fine Gothic cathedral.

There is no need here to describe the cathedral—the guide-books do that. But it is worth while to climb its tower, although as you mount the stairs grow narrower and narrower until you are filled with uncomfortable fear lest you should become firmly stuck between the massive walls—massive in all conscience, since they have to bear the weight of the “Bancloche,” one of the largest bells in Europe. Ultimately you reach the summit, from which you have an unparalleled view of Lorraine, with its rolling hills rising from the silver streak of the Moselle. Here was once a famous Roman fortress, the Franks made it the capital of Austrasia, the Germans besieged it for two months in 1870, and some of the severest battles of the Franco-Prussian War were fought out within a few miles of the city. No place with such a past behind it can lack interest.

Whereas Metz is undoubtedly French, the inhabitants of Strasbourg nearly all talk German, and most of them look German. Nevertheless, they have readily altered the notices in their shops to French, and they appear well contented with their lot. To the visitor they give the impression that they have so often changed their rulers that they have wisely ceased to worry about politics. Even the troubles of the last decade fade into significance before these old, weather-worn houses. Strasbourg can boast a more impressive and much older cathedral than Metz—part of the crypt dates from 1015. It has also the famous astronomical clock, which occupies the time of thousands of visitors who might be better engaged in wandering through the tiny, ancient streets in the neighbourhood of the river. Monsieur Schwilgué, its inventor, is said to have spent twenty years over the necessary calculations and four years over its construction. One can forgive a man for wasting



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

his own time, but one trembles to think of the time he must have made others waste. And the strange thing is that people pay for the pleasure of standing among gloomy arches waiting, open-mouthed, to see figures move and cocks flap their wings. I have done so myself.

In Strasbourg you may lunch in the Maison Kammerzell, the ground floor of which was built in 1467, you may dine in the Cabaret des Tanneurs, which dates from 1561, and you may stroll along the bank of a canal, through what is now mysteriously called "la Petite France," where picturesque sixteenth-century houses stand by the water's edge, for all the world like the houses in the older parts of Venice. To each house is moored a raft, or landing stage, but the traffic of Strasbourg now goes by road rather than by river, and the landing stages are for the most part, used only by women who come down to them to do their washing. There is now a large and busy port on the Rhine, two miles away, but it is to be doubted whether the city will ever again know the prosperity it knew when it was an independent republic. During the Franco-German War 193,722 projectiles fell on the town, and hardly an important building escaped damage or destruction. Every visitor will be deeply thankful that at least "la Petite France" has remained to remind us of the splendours of old.

There are two memories of the Revolution which cannot be forgotten in Strasbourg. It was seriously proposed by the Sansculottes to pull down the cathedral spire, since its height above the surrounding buildings was an insult to the principle of equality. The proposal was not adopted, but until the destruction of the town library during the 1870-1871 war the visitor might see the large Red Cap of Liberty, made of tin, which was placed on the summit of the spire at the command of the revolutionaries. And in Strasbourg, on April 25th, 1792, Rouget de Lisle

## STRASBOURG AND METZ

is said to have sung for the first time his song that was soon to be known as the "Marseillaise." What would the barrel-organs of the world have done if Rouget de Lisle had never lived or if Strasbourg had never existed!

To give a picture of the life, past and present, of this old town one would have to write a complete history of Europe. This book has no such ambitions, and therefore I will only suggest that those travellers who love, for a few brief hours, to escape from the present in the memories of the past should not, on future occasions, see Strasbourg and Metz merely from the windows of a train. The train may be taking them to Basle or Bruges, but I am not sure that any street in Basle or Bruges is as picturesque as "la Petite France." In any case it is not so cheerful.

## A PHILANTHROPIST *MALGRE* *MOI*

IN a second-hand book shop in Rome I discovered a delightful old edition of J. J. Rousseau's "*Discours sur les Causes de l'Inégalité parmi les Hommes*," of which I was disgustingly proud. I bought it for five lire, which at that time was about one shilling, and when a great book-collecting friend came to see me I took him and my Rousseau to the terrace of the Café Aragno. At once he offered me fifteen shillings for the volume, and by the time I had paid for the drinks his offer had reached thirty-five shillings. But I was going in a few days to Geneva and I knew that, if I wanted to sell it, the Genevese would offer me far more, for were they not referred to in the preface as "*Magnifiques et Très Honorés Seigneurs*"? So I shook my head and left my friend glaring out of his tram window in jealous rage. No, I thought, this little book would make a great addition to my little library, and I tapped my pocket proudly. I tapped it again, anxiously, and then the other pockets, still more anxiously. But in vain. I had left my treasure on the café table, and someone had profited by my philanthropy long before I got back there to look for it.

I had proved to my own dissatisfaction the truth of one more proverb—pride comes before a fall.

## HOUSE-HUNTING IN ROME

It is a platitude that some people never know when they are well off. I have even heard people grumble about the difficulties of finding a house in London. I have even grumbled myself. But I cease to grumble when I remember house-hunting in Rome.

"Tammy," the famous barman in the Grand Hotel, warned me the first morning that it would be difficult, but I laughed. That depended on the way you set about it. Official documents always worked wonders in after-war Europe; I had but to obtain the assistance of the Prime Minister and the problem was settled.

The *chef de cabinet* of the Prime Minister was as obliging a man as I had ever met. Nothing was too much trouble. In his own fair hand he wrote a long and cordial letter to the Director of the Housing Office, the *Ufficio degli Alloggi*, explaining the urgency of my case, and handed it to me with an air which said plainly: "Your difficulties are over. If you would like this Ministry as your home you have only to say so."

Full of easy confidence I sought out the *Ufficio degli Alloggi* in the Via della Scrofa—more pleasant in Italian than in English, in which language it would have to be called "The Street of the Sow." There was no mistaking the office, for the queue in front of it blocked up half the street. Most of the people were bedraggled in the extreme, with picturesque tears in their clothes such as have stage gypsies. As always in Italy, they appeared to have no other employment for their time—I have known people wait

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

three hours and more to buy specimens of a new issue of stamps at the post office—and felt they might as well be in the queue as anywhere else. The only people who were busy were mothers suckling their babies that they, too, might later grow up to stand in queues.

The Director of Housing, when I saw him, was affable and optimistic. I filled up a gigantic form which, he assured me, would lead to my finding the ideal home within a few hours. It goes without saying that I never heard another word from him until, nearly two years later, he proposed to take possession of my flat, and to let it to somebody else, because it was left vacant for four days.

I poured forth my griefs into the willing ear of a delightful man who asked me to pass the salt in a restaurant. His English was good, and he assured me in Cockney that he knew of the very thing I wanted. In the meantime he would like to show me some wonderful bargains he had made in Vienna. From every pocket he produced articles in Austrian enamel; he had a wonderful cigarette case with a diamond coronet on it—which case another Italian, a social climber, showed me a few weeks later with the assurance that it had been given him by the ex-Emperor of Austria!—and his room at his hotel was crowded out with furs, umbrellas, hand-bags. He could put me in the way of unheard-of bargains, and the next morning we would drive out to see the villa.

We did. A neat maid met us at the gate of a charming little house near the British Embassy. Her mistress was out, so that we could not see over the place for the moment, but it was quite understood that it was not yet sold and would be reserved for me. Perhaps if I could call back to-morrow . . .

That evening I bought, under some pressure from my new friend, a silver-fox fur for fifty pounds. The

## HOUSE-HUNTING IN ROME

next day I discovered the mistress of the villa, who assured me she had sold it a week earlier. She could not understand why the maid had told me it was still for sale. I could, but I have often wondered how much she received by way of a tip from my merchant friend. I could not ask him for he discreetly disappeared. When next I met him he had an expensive German motor-car. By now he is probably a millionaire.

I advertised, I paid small fortunes to agencies, I was introduced to an imposing-looking gentleman who could find me a flat if anybody in Rome could. He found me several, all with a few sticks of furniture in them. I could have the flat if I paid several hundred pounds for the furniture. After almost a year he showed me one that was possible, and I agreed to take it if the conditions were as he told me. They were not, and I refused to take it, having in the meantime found another flat myself. Whereupon the agent—who, by the way, was entitled to call himself *Cavaliere* or “knight”—and a mysterious general who had also attached himself to us came to demand commission. I pointed out that they had never even seen the flat I had finally chosen and therefore could claim no commission. The General persuaded a solicitor to write a threatening letter to me; the Knight showed a friend of mine a knife he had bought for my benefit; I, in turn, persuaded the police to call on these two gentlemen and point out that blackmail was against the rules of the game. In the end, for the sake of peace, my solicitor advised me to pay half the commission, and the General and the Knight probably went to drink to my eternal damnation in a café, while I went to my new flat, convinced that my troubles were now over.

Not a bit of it. They were only beginning. Some days we had electric current, some days gas, and some days water. But never, or hardly ever, the

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

electricity and gas and water altogether, although some days we had none. I have not yet discovered an English cook who expectorates in the kitchen as though it were the most natural thing in the world to do. Perhaps it is? Nor, in England, have the people opposite broken my windows by throwing unwanted but heavy rubbish out of theirs into the street.

There is, in this brief sketch, no conscious word of exaggeration, and I have letters from the General and the Knight to prove it.

And yet, just opposite my study window was a warm, pink villa with a great stone pine in the garden. Why have we no sunshine and pink villas and stone pines in England? Would that I could begin house-hunting in Rome once again! I would welcome even the Knight and the General.

## “THE PLAYGROUND OF EUROPE”

SWITZERLAND, someone once said to me, is a country of mountains, milk chocolate and goitres. But there is more than that to it—how, for example, did he come to forget the cow-bells?

People are nearly as foolishly sentimental about cow-bells as they are about yodelling. Personally I think they are equally unpleasant. Nobody who has been awakened day after day by the clashing of cow-bells just beneath his window can feel a great affection for them. They sound all right, I grant, at a distance, but so do the hum of machinery, the roar of traffic, and the barking of a dog. The cows themselves like them, but then cows like hay and other things which do not appeal to the human being. Many people will not believe it, but I am assured it is a fact, that cows in Switzerland are often punished for their misdeeds by having their cow-bells taken away from them. If I were a Swiss cow I should commit a great number of misdeeds.

The best of the Swiss people are probably the *hôteliars*, for they have all travelled and are men of the world. Among them you may find one baron, several colonels, scores of doctors, and a great deal of intelligence, to say nothing of the organizing powers of several quartermasters-general and the tact of several diplomats. They have to be able to please the kings in exile, the *parvenu* and *Schieber*, and the people who want eggs and bacon, toast and marmalade for breakfast. They must supervise the choosing of the *menu*, the preparing of it and the serving of it.



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

Their hotels increase fifty per cent. in value if they can go from table to table during dinner and exchange a few intelligent sentences with their clients—pardon, “guests” as they are always called, even when they come to pay the bill—and I have seen grand dukes beam with pride when the proprietor of the hotel shakes hands with them. The *hôtelier* must know how to organize dances, he is expected to be able to guarantee fine weather, and in many winter resorts you will find him at six o’clock in the morning, if you are up at that horrible hour yourself, out on the skating rink discussing the surface with that most important of individuals, the icemaker.

The *hôtelier*, in fact, makes the busy bee look an absolute slacker. Even out of season, when St. Moritz, for example, is closed to visitors, the hotels are thronged with painters and carpenters, and the *hôtelier* is fortunate if he can escape for a few weeks’ holiday to London. Equally fortunate is the Londoner if he is wise enough to escape to Switzerland for his holiday out of the “season.”

It is reasonable that people should not want to be in Paris or London in August, but that they should be so frightened of the mountains in the spring is absurd. Once, for example, I decided to go to Champéry, the Swiss counterpart of Chamonix, in April. “It isn’t the season,” my friends told me, peering at me with astonishment through the fog, and I confess that I was nearly put off by the discovery that the two largest hotels of the place would not be opened for another six weeks. Only letters of encouragement from a few of the very few Englishmen who live up in the Swiss Alps all the year round persuaded me to try my foolhardy adventure, and in due course I found myself in the little train that climbs up from the Rhône Valley along the famous Val d’Illiez, which according to that prosaic but great German, Baedeker, is well worth a visit on account of “its fresh green pastures,

## “THE PLAYGROUND OF EUROPE”

picturesque scenery and stalwart inhabitants.” Before I had been in the train ten minutes I realized the folly of this talk about the seasons, and I degenerated in my own opinion of myself from an arctic explorer to a common or garden tourist.

The Val d’Illiez is noted for its fresh green pastures, but it would be more noted still if people took the trouble to visit it when the fruit blossom is at its best. Below them runs the river, and rising steeply from it are the slopes so beloved by the cattle of the Val (second to none in the Canton of the Valais unless it be the cattle of the Val d’Entremont, where every man’s ambition is to own a *Reine*, or a victor in the cow-fights which are the passion of that little-known Swiss valley). And, dotted haphazard on the slopes, reaching well up above the snow line, are the little chalets that shelter the cow-herds when they climb higher and higher in search of the fresh grass that springs up after the retreating snow. Right up above the boldest chalet are the seven great peaks of the Dent du Midi, one of the most impressive mountains in Switzerland.

And it is only if you visit Champéry out of the season that you will find the snow reaching down almost to the railway line, and all the orchards one mass of blossoms, and best of all, the glorious pageant of the daffodils. Not the little daffodils that you sometimes find herded together in woods and fields of South England, but great yellow daffodils bobbing up and down under the cherry trees and laughing to the snow across the valley.

Champéry itself, with its old church clock that strikes all the hours twice, so that if you did not hear it the first time you are pretty certain to do so the second—although, thank heaven, time there is of little account and there are no trains to business to think about—was delightful, even though its eighty odd chalets were all shuttered up pending the arrival

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

of their summer tenants. And there are great advantages in being the only visitor in a place. Never was a bed so carefully made—in a bedroom facing out across the noisy stream to the Dent du Midi with its white flanks strangely streaked with avalanches—and never was a dinner more pleasingly served, nor the waitress, from her appearance a descendant of the Saracens who are said to have formed the population of the valley, more *empresée*. And a landlord who looks on you with the same pleasure as we watch the first swallow of the year is a very different sort of individual from a landlord who is busy and *blasé* with all his rich and imposing tourists.

Again, if you visit Switzerland in the season, walks are merely walks, whereas out of the season they are adventures. I set out for Barmaz, a few cowherds' sheds beneath the frowning cliffs of the Dents Blanches which make a favourite objective for a summer excursion from Champéry, and by whatever path I approached my destination I found myself foiled by snow. It is quite exciting to start for a spring walk through the daffodil fields, to find oneself half an hour later in snow up to the knees, to mark within a few yards the massed-up snow blocks that show where an avalanche has finished its devastating journey, and then to come across a dark patch where the snow has melted away and to find that it is all dotted with snowdrops. And just before dusk, after a hot spring day, you can stand with a pair of field-glasses on the verandah of your hotel and pick out as many as half a dozen avalanches in half an hour—a low rumbling, a great cloud of snow rolling down the mountain side, and a black streak behind it.

In future when I wish to go for a holiday—or rather, when I can go for one, for I always wish to go on every fine day—I shall make the most penetrating inquiries as to the opening and closing dates of the

## “THE PLAYGROUND OF EUROPE”

season in some little Swiss village, and then shall go there some time between the closing and opening dates. And so much the better if that period happens to include the last fortnight in April, when I shall fill my pocket-book, as I did at Champéry, with all sorts of wild flowers which I mean to identify when I get home, and which, as happened in the case of Champéry, I shall probably lose one by one in crowded trains and muddy streets. And small matter if I do lose them, for some other lover of the spring may pick them up, and be transported by them to his own particular chalet in the Alps, with his own particular mountain in front of him, and with his own beloved stream rushing noisily along in the valley below.

The peacefulness of Switzerland is not confined to the higher and smaller resorts, for even in the cities you have little of the hatreds and passions that do so much to make the rest of Europe such an unpleasant place to live in. Heaven knows the Swiss take the keenest interest in world politics, and would sooner go without their breakfast than their newspaper. But somehow their discussions are “village pump” discussions, and leave you unmoved. In Switzerland everything runs smoothly: there are no very poor, or if there are they are hidden away carefully in the Canton Ticino, where they are declared to be Italian immigrants, and there are no very rich, or if there are they hide their riches away carefully in relatively modest villas. Everybody wears black on Sundays, everybody takes his detachable cuffs off and puts them on the sideboard, everybody is honest and clean. Switzerland, in fact, is populated by men who dress like members of the Right Wing of the Labour Party; it is the Labour Party state in being. In other words, it has perhaps the best social legislation in the world, but its politics generally lack that zest which makes you forget all about dinner in your anxiety to prove to the other man that he is wrong and that you are right.

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

Being a country that is dedicated to perpetual neutrality, there is a tremendous fuss about the national fête days and the Army. It is told of a visitor that he swore not to leave the country until he had been ten days in one place without seeing all the streets hung with flags. When he made that oath he was a young man, and now he hobbles on two sticks each day to the door of his hotel in the hope that one fête day will pass by forgotten so that he will be able to go back to England to see how his wife is. And at least once a month in every village you may come round the corner and find a military band, a group of girls in peasant costume, a platoon of infantry with "tin helmets" and fixed bayonets, and the local celebrities in morning coats, brown boots and straw hats, all busy celebrating some village Hampden or other. And should you suggest to a Swiss that William Tell was only a legend I verily believe and hope he would so far forget his *bourgeois* correctness as to smite you. But even Germany in her prime was not better organized than Switzerland; the postal service should make the postmasters-general of the rest of Europe turn post-office-red with shame; French-Swiss, German-Swiss and Italian-Swiss can sit in the same parliament in Berne without throwing inkpots at each other; and you can lie in bed in the morning in Geneva and get through to Basle or Zurich by telephone within five minutes or dictate a telegram in English to the post office with little more trouble than you would have in England.

Even Berne is as remote from world politics as any capital could be. It is so quiet and respectable that if you find yourself out in its clean, quaint streets after nine o'clock in the evening you instinctively slink along under the shadow of the houses like an evil-doer. During the War things were slightly different, and the Hôtel Bellevue was crowded with diplomats and spies and spies and diplomats until everyone was

## “THE PLAYGROUND OF EUROPE”

suspected and took care to be indoors by eight o'clock instead of nine. But now even the Bellevue has become peaceful, and the only event of diplomatic importance is the Monday evening ball.

For many weeks I lived, or rather, existed there, and in the dining-room the Minister of A. had a table on one side of me and the Minister of B. had a table on the other. Every Monday after lunch the Minister of A. would stroll across to the Minister of B. and ask what he was going to do in the afternoon. To which the Minister of B. would say, “What about a game of billiards?” and his colleague would say, “Great idea,” or the South American equivalent of it, and they would go off to the billiard-room for the whole afternoon. On Tuesday the process was quite different, for the rôles would be reversed. The Minister of B. would go across to the Minister of A. etc. Wednesday's programme was the same as Monday's, and Thursday's the same as Tuesday's. When one of the Ministers upset the programme by going out to the Bernerhof for lunch the excitement became intense, and my right hand made tremendous bets with my left hand as to which Minister would make first move. Once they confounded me by both getting up at exactly the same moment and meeting each other half-way. Possibly I exaggerate slightly, but that is the spirit of Berne. A palpitating place! And yet a very attractive one; and I never lose the opportunity of staying there between two trains in order to walk up and down the Marktgasse thanking heaven that I do not live there, or to watch the Robot-like policeman directing the traffic with his white truncheon.

Zurich is far brighter, with a Bahnhofstrasse that is more German than any part of Germany, two cabarets, and a lovely park along the side of the lake. Lucerne would be even more beautiful and attractive than it is did you not feel that duty called you to see

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

the "sights" like the Glacier Garden and the Lion. Most of your time there is spent in hanging over the bridge near the station looking for Archibald, an enormous fish which I have only seen once and which nobody else believes I have ever seen at all. I am frightened to say how big that fish was lest the rest of this book should be discredited. Lausanne has a cold wind and an attractive street of excellent shops. Small wonder that those Swiss who have to climb three or four times a day from the station to the Place St. François are among the best mountaineers in the world. Gibbon, famous not only for his "Decline and Fall" but also for the remark of the French nobleman that he took his daily exercise "by walking three times round Mr. Gibbon," could scarcely have got down to the station and back once during the whole time that he lived on the Place St. François. Montreux and Lugano, one probably the cleanest and the other probably the dirtiest place in Switzerland, are so beautiful that you are certain, when you look at them through half-closed eyes, that they only exist in the scenery of a musical comedy—for preference in the act in which the handsome duke, disguised as a chauffeur, has his famous love duet with the American heiress, disguised as a lady's maid. The trees and flowers and quiet lake with the snow mountains in the background are simply incredible, though it is advisable not to test the reality of the mountains by falling off them.

Only in Basle and Geneva do you get any real reminder of the passions of Europe. Basle is so close to the German and the new French frontiers that, even seven years after the armistice, it is still an exciting place, with such muddles over the rates of exchange that if you take care to change Swiss money into French francs or Austrian crowns before buying your ticket to Paris or Vienna you gain the comforting, but mistaken, conviction that you are almost being

## “THE PLAYGROUND OF EUROPE”

paid to travel. And the good Baselers are in the habit of blowing themselves up with hand grenades and shells, which they find on Sunday excursions to Hartmannsweilerkopf, and which they put near the fire to dry.

Basle was the scene of my most disastrous venture in the realms of high finance. I was on my way to Brussels in 1919 and had a few hours to waste in the town. Naturally I had made my usual pilgrimage to the Rhine and had let my thoughts sweep down on its waters (as propaganda leaflets in German used to sweep down on little rafts during the War) between the two great countries whose civilizations it has made so different, and on my way back I came across a crowd outside one of the money-changer's shops. According to an announcement chalked up on a blackboard outside, the money-changer, who had not the conventional astrakhan coat-collar and the conventional cigar and was therefore, presumably, an honest man, was disposed to sell 750 German marks for 100 Swiss francs. I stared in amazement, for I knew that the day before the exchange had been at 13.50 or thereabouts. There must have been some great upheaval in Germany. I entered the shop and bought German marks for 300 Swiss Francs, and then went to a neighbouring bank to find out there how much the exchange had dropped. It had not changed, they told me, and so I sold them all my marks at 13.20 francs for every hundred marks. I had hardly time to catch my train, but I willingly sacrificed my corner seat in order to make more money at this rate. Somehow that money-changer must know of some happening in Germany of which the banker still knew nothing. By hiring a taxi I managed to change all my money, at 750 marks to the 100 francs, and to sell it all again at 13.20 francs to the 100 marks. It was only an hour later when I was in the train and took my money out



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

of my pockets to gloat over my winnings that I discovered that I had less than I had started out with, and it took me nearly another hour to find out that to buy 750 marks for 100 Swiss francs did not mean that the Swiss exchange was at 7.50 as I had imagined, but at 13.333 recurring. I had been buying marks at 13.333 recurring and had been selling them again at 13.20! I now profess to consider all people who succeed in making money out of the exchange as mean profiteers, worthy only of contempt.

Geneva reminds you of the passions of war, but in a different way, for Geneva's mission is to remind you of war in order that you may work to put an end to it. Much has been said against Geneva as the headquarters of the League of Nations, but if Switzerland had to be chosen Geneva was the only city in Switzerland that would do, for Maxim's Bar announced on the first day of the First Assembly that, as a compliment to the League of Nations, the Bar would remain open that night an hour longer than usual. I do not know what steps the League took to show its appreciation of this act of courtesy, but it would obviously be impossible to change the seat of the League after such a compliment. And I hope that the members of the Secretariat will be far too busy restoring war-weary Europe to peace ever to grow bored by the view of the dome of Monte Blanc from the windows of the League Secretariat, or by the joy of going to their office across a bridge from which they have one of the most beautiful views in Europe. Geneva is clean and cheerful (in so far as any Swiss town can be cheerful) and beautiful and hard-working—a city of peace, at peace with itself and the rest of the world.

Dare I suggest that it is the ideal home of the League of Nations? There are strong, big men on the Secretariat who love not Geneva, and therefore perhaps the less said the better.

## SAN MARINO

FOR a country which is still more or less in a state of war, San Marino is, at first sight, disappointing—there are no visas, no soldiers or Customs officials at the frontier, nothing indeed but an old stone, on which the letters “S.P.” (Papal States) and “R.S.M.” (Republic of San Marino) have long since become almost illegible, to show you where you leave Italy and enter the territory of the smallest republic in the world. The proud isolation of its position on the summit of Mount Titanus, two thousand five hundred feet above sea level, leads you to expect a savage people, jealously watchful of their frontiers and openly distrustful of foreigners. The reluctance of the road to take you there tends, too, to heighten the impression. From Rimini it sets out due south, within a mile or two it has turned east, then north, climbing up past vineyards and fields of maize and wheat, cultivated on little pocket handkerchiefs of earth that the peasants of few nations would have the industry and energy to cultivate, then south again, and then zig-zag up the mountain side until you arrive at the walls and great gate of San Marino *Città*. It is “a reeling road, a rolling road, that rambles round the shire,” and that would make Chesterton’s “rolling English drunkard” blush with shame.

The gate of San Marino is formidable in appearance, but there are no armed men with lances and pikes to defend it, no soldiers with molten lead and stones to importune you from above—only a notice

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

announcing that motor-cars may not enter. And what motor-car would desire to enter and to climb the appallingly steep, narrow streets to the Rocca?

There is, in San Marino, none of that fierce isolation you would have expected from its position. Instead, the first proclamation that meets your eye is an appeal to the people to remember that they are *Sanmarinesi* before they are Fascisti or Socialists, so greatly are the inhabitants interested in the political disputes of their neighbours. The lack of isolation, indeed, has been the chief trouble of the little Republic for the last few years, for so many Communists took refuge in 1922 in her territory to escape from the Fascisti that San Marino was forced to break the tradition of fifteen hundred years—for since the days of her founder she had never refused sanctuary to refugees, and every Italian will remember how she offered protection to Garibaldi in 1840, when he fled from the Austrians before going to America—and to introduce visas, and to call upon the Italian Government to lend some carabinieri for the preservation of order. San Marino's own constabulary amounted to about seven gendarmes and seven carabinieri, and the Communist refugees, many of whom had ideas of disorder which did not appeal to the Republic, numbered over one hundred!

Now, however, San Marino has reorganized her own police forces, and the Italian carabinieri have been withdrawn and their place taken by twenty brand new San Marino carabinieri. The prison in the Rocca, at the summit of the hill, will hold twenty prisoners. One carabineer for one prisoner—what could be better? Not that the twenty prisoners are ever likely to be found, for the Republic is one of the most orderly places in the world, despite the Communists, and a prisoner is such a rare event that the people climb the hill to look at him and to hand him cigarettes through the prison bars,

## SAN MARINO

Your disappointment that San Marino is so accessible is soon lost in admiration for this Republic of twelve thousand inhabitants which has remained independent for over a thousand years, has always lived up to her motto, "Libertas," and has never forgotten that ambitions and territorial acquisitions bring wars and disasters in their wake. Her present constitution, although reformed in the seventeenth century, differs but little from that drafted in the ninth century; since the fourteenth century she has been ruled by two Captains-Regent, elected every six months, one for the agricultural population and one for the "city"; throughout her history she has always held liberty more precious than power and even refused the flattering offers of Napoleon, who sent the scientist, Monge, to the Sister Republic with all sorts of promises of greatness and wealth; and until a year or two ago her people had never known the burdens of taxation—for the first time in their history they are now faced with an income-tax! And, although every able-bodied citizen must know how to bear arms in the defence of his country, the budget for the Army before the War was well under four hundred pounds a year. The Republic possesses her artillery, presented to her by the King of Italy, ruler of her only potential enemies, but she keeps the guns in their proper place, namely the museum. She could not even fire them off for practice without endangering her neutrality, so small is her territory.

When I went to San Marino it was raining heavily, and I at once took refuge in the Government Palace. There one of the Captains-Regent, whom I fear I must have offended because I forgot to give him his official title of "Excellency," introduced me to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who explained to me what San Marino had done in the Great War. As soon as Italy entered the struggle, *Sanmarinesi* were interned by the Austrians. The Republic protested,

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

but meanwhile many of her citizens had joined the Italian Army and Austria therefore replied that she considered San Marino as being in a state of war. As, indeed, she was, for she had her killed and wounded on the Italian front and in the Argonne, and she equipped a war hospital, which was lost in the disaster of Caporetto. Her inhabitants made further sacrifices, and gave another hospital to the Italians; and her neutrality is compromised by a large tablet placed in the entrance hall of the Government Palace, bearing General Diaz's official *communiqué* announcing the defeat of Austria on November 4th, 1918.

Then came complications. Although San Marino has a Minister in France and Consuls-General in London and elsewhere, she was not invited to send delegates to the Peace Conference. Italy, who looks after most of her foreign interests, was unable to sign a peace treaty for her, and therefore there is, technically, no peace between San Marino and the former enemy powers, although she has already officially recognized the Austrian Republic. Altogether San Marino's foreign affairs appear complicated, except as far as Italy is concerned. And with Italy the relations are excellent—so much so that you can buy Italian tobacco and salt more cheaply in San Marino than you can in Italy, for tobacco and salt are supplied to the Republic at cost price (in compensation for San Marino's agreement to abolish Customs duties between the two countries) and the Republic has no need to tax them so heavily as Italy must. Her relations with other countries are far more extensive than one would imagine, for she has extradition treaties with England, Belgium, Holland, and the United States, and a labour convention with France; England, Poland, Switzerland, and Columbia, too, have diplomatic relations with the Republic—England through the British Consul-

## SAN MARINO

General in Leghorn—and San Marino even has her representative at the International Institute of Agriculture. A proud little Republic and a satisfied one, since her anxiety lest the Free City of Danzig should rival her littleness has been allayed.

Fate was kind to me, for when I had climbed through the rain to the proud tower of the Rocca, the clouds broke for a few minutes. Far away to the north was the dark line of the stone pine forest of Ravenna, where Byron used to ride; scudding into Rimini were dozens of fishing-boats with their yellow sails, circled and striped and patched with blue and red and white; the sea to the south was streaked with sun and dark shadows of cloud; beneath me, at the foot of the precipices of Mount Titano, were quiet little farms, Republican or Royalist, with grenadines waving their red flowers in the wind. Then the clouds swept up again and as I slithered down the streets of the "city" I seemed to feel within me some of the pride of the *Sanmarinesi* in their centuries of independence and of generous liberty. I proved my gratitude to them by assisting their exchequer—I went into the Post Office and bought far more Republican stamps than I should ever need if I lived in the Republic for years. I would have bought coins, too, if it had been possible, but the money of San Marino is now only for the numismatists.

## WITH THE REDS IN THE RUHR

THE monarchist movement headed by von Kapp and von Luttwitz broke out in Germany in March, 1920, and as soon as might be I crossed Lake Constance from Romanshorn to Lindau *en route* for any place that promised a good story. Before leaving Switzerland I had spent several hours and several francs on a code for use in case of a censorship, which code I had, luckily, never to use as the outbreak would have been over and done with before I should have had time to code a message explaining why it had begun. Besides which, I accidentally left my copy of the code in the Hôtel Vier Jahreszeiten in Munich.

I had not been in Germany since 1914, and it was with some trepidation that I landed at Lindau, for I had no idea what sort of treatment to expect. Beyond making me so sick with *Ersatz-Kaffee* at Kempten that I missed my train they treated me everywhere with the greatest good humour. At Lindau a man with two iron hooks instead of arms came on the boat to fetch my luggage and I felt decidedly uncomfortable when he told me his arms had been blown off by a shell during the War. In due course he saw my passport and discovered I was English. He was delighted, for he had been a prisoner of war near Hull and insisted on talking broken English at me. And when he discovered I had fought against him on Hill 60, where he had been wounded and captured, his delight knew no bounds. He was, to use a colloquial phrase, "all over himself" with joy. He almost, but not quite, refused my tip.

## WITH THE REDS IN THE RUHR

I tramped around Lindau in the rain for several hours, not being sufficiently buoyed up by the "conquering hero" feeling to find courage to enter the café of a beaten enemy. I felt too conspicuous, for while the Allied Powers during the War had developed curves in their clothes, the Germans had become square. My tailor must dream of circles while German tailors dream of cubes. Besides Germans have longer trousers than Englishmen, despite the cost of cloth, and I felt bashful. In due course, however, a train arrived and took me to Kempten, half way to Munich. Here the engine driver went on strike and we stayed the night. The next morning he relented and went on, without me (owing to the Ersatz coffee) so that I only reached Munich in the evening. I found on arrival a cheery British Consul who told me more about Germany in ten minutes than anyone else had done before or has done since in three hours, and who gave me Benedictine to drink out of a beer glass. Only a stern sense of duty drove me from the hospitable welcome of Munich.

In due course I found a seat in the first train that went from Munich to Frankfurt since the outbreak of the Kapp "Putsch." I was with an English colleague from Vienna, also bound for Essen, where the Communists had formed Red Guards to counteract the counter-revolution of the reactionaries. At some station on the way—I think it must have been Stuttgart—a large, fat man with glasses climbed ponderously into our carriage and took the one vacant seat. My friend and I were quoting poetry at each other (what an occupation for a train journey!) and the fat man put me off my stroke, as it were. "That's the worst of a sleek, fat creature like that," I said, convinced that his English would not go beyond "yes" and "no" and "pale ale." He gave no sign.

We creaked into another station and I proposed to buy a bottle of wine to improve our lunch. And as



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

I was about to leave the carriage the fat man leant across and tapped me heavily on the knee. Then, to my astonishment, he began to sing. And this is what he sang:

“ I had a little hen with a little wooden leg,  
The nicest little hen that ever laid an egg.  
And another little drink, and another little drink,  
And another little drink wouldn't do us any harm.”

Over the “ little drink ” we discovered that the fat man was the Berlin correspondent of a London daily paper, and one of the best fellows in the world. He was an excellent journalist, an excellent friend, and an excellent eater. He once nearly knocked my glass from my hand because I was about to sip my wine before I had had anything to eat and should thus have been unable to appreciate the wine's *bouquet*, and he once marched out of Willy's Restaurant on the *Kurfürstendamm*, refusing to eat or pay for the dinner he had ordered, and leaving me to fight a rearguard action to the best of my ability—and all because the waiter put our white burgundy on ice.

He left us at Frankfurt but joined us a few days later in Essen, where he showed the Red Guards how to carry on their revolt.

In Frankfurt we were assured that Essen and most of the Ruhr district was in the hands of the most ferocious Bolsheviks, and we were encouraged by horrible stories of atrocities. At Bochum we passed into the territory held by these Red Guards, and I confess my heart failed me a little when I heard one of them clanking down the train corridor with his rifle knocking ominously against the woodwork as he came. I had already chosen the lamp-post on which I should probably be hanged.

“ Now for it,” we thought.

The door opened and the Red Guard entered. He stood shyly first on one foot and then on the other, for all the world like a little schoolgirl at a party. He

## WITH THE REDS IN THE RUHR

glanced vaguely up at the racks. "I suppose you haven't any rifles or revolvers hidden about you?" he asked. "I have orders to search the train. So sorry to disturb you."

We both interviewed him and then let him go.

In Essen itself things were quiet. The post office and the station were spattered with bullet holes, but the streets were quite orderly. Outside the Town Hall was a large crowd examining two field guns captured from the Government troops who had been sent under the command of one of the most extreme reactionaries in Germany to disperse the Communists, and other Germans gazed stolidly at the motor lorries which set out, packed with soldiers and Red Cross nurses—the latter generally seated on looted chairs—to the "front," near Wesel. The crowds were kept back by Red military police, each with two hand grenades and a revolver in his belt, and the steps of the Town Hall were closely guarded, for it was here that the local "Soviet" met.

Thanks to the efforts of a Communist journalist, who was serving a long sentence in Essen gaol for his share in the Red rising when last I heard of him, we were able to arrange with members of the "Soviet" to visit the front. We were to start the next morning at seven sharp: in reality we started at eleven.

Our car had a red flag and no speed limit. Had we not been held up from time to time by groups of Red Guards who wanted to know who we were, we should certainly have had an accident somewhere, for the Communists with us undoubtedly felt that excessive speed added to their impressiveness. In an hour we had reached the headquarters of the Brigade operating against the Government troops at Wesel.

In another half-hour we were returning, just as quickly. Only this time we were preceded by another car with two rifles pointing suggestively over the back,

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

and a Corporal with a revolver in his hand, stood on the step of our car. We had been arrested as spies. The coal dust with which the other car smothered us was so thick that the Corporal might conceivably have missed us had he used his revolver, but the chances were not good enough. So we appealed to his stomach.

"When we reach Mülheim (the Red Army Headquarters) we will just get our permits to visit the front and then we might all have lunch together before we come back," we suggested.

The poor fellow, who had had no decent food for days, for the Red Army A.S.C., was far from perfect, was delighted and pointed his revolver obligingly at the floor. He also confided to us that the officer, who had refused to accept our passes from the Essen "Soviet" and who had sent us to the Army Headquarters under arrest as spies, was a fool.

At Mülheim we were at once taken to see the Commander-in-Chief—a house painter in everyday life, called, I believe, Leistner—and he at once gave us the necessary permits. He was dressed in a German field-grey tunic, British khaki trousers and a Homburg hat, and he made the most of his opportunity for propaganda. For twenty minutes or so he insisted to us that the aims of the Red Guards were the same as those of the Allies, namely to destroy Prussian militarism. Personally I was willing to listen with real interest, but our Corporal was not of the same mind. I could see he was getting more and more impatient.

At last his hunger got the better of him. He went across and tapped his Commander-in-Chief on the chest. "Yes, that's all very well," he said, "but I want my lunch."

I could not but laugh when I thought of a German corporal trying the same treatment on Hindenburg two years before.

## WITH THE REDS IN THE RUHR

In time we returned to the front. We went through Dinslaken and other villages that were crowded with transport and makeshift ambulances, and then out along a straight road that led to Wesel. Almost I could picture myself back on the road that led from Poperinghe to Ypres; there were the same rows of poplars, the same *pavé*, and, far ahead, the clouds of smoke from bursting shrapnel. The road itself was thronged with Red Guards, clad in the strangest and most disreputable mixtures of uniforms and "mufti," all tramping one way—away from the front. The whole Red Army, they shouted to us, was retreating.

Suddenly we came to a large open space where we had to stop the car, for it was in full view of the Reichswehr. In an instant we were invaded by troops who commandeered the car to carry wounded, and we went on on foot until the shelling became too bad, and drove us in an undignified rush to the ditch. The Red Army, such as it was, was holding a thin, disconnected line. It had no support trenches and no supports, little ammunition and no food. There were a few machine guns, generally in emplacements which were conspicuous for at least a mile. Germany had forgotten what the War had taught her of the art of camouflage.

Everywhere we were delightfully treated—except during one or two brief moments when we were pounced upon as spies. At the most we were asked, very politely, for cigarettes or chocolate. When our car returned we brought down in it an unfortunate village girl who had joined the local Red Cross and had been wounded through the lung, for the Red Cross nurses were in the trenches with the men. She was terribly embarrassed when we compelled her to occupy the best seat in the car, and painfully anxious that the car should not be stained with blood. And a young fellow who had had his leg badly smashed

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

refused absolutely to sit down on the way to the dressing station lest he should incommode us.

Poor ignorant souls! Ten days later their pitiful little war against reaction had been crushed and the German Government troops, having broken their agreement not to advance beyond a certain line, were in occupation of Essen and Düsseldorf.

Every journalist who was in Essen with the Red Guards has a relatively tender spot in his heart for them, for they fought against enormous odds pluckily and well. But they were as muddle-headed a crowd as one could find. They marched off to the front boldly enough, singing a little song we had taught them, to the tune of "The Church's One Foundation":

"My old man's a fireman—  
Now what d'you think of that?  
'E wears gorblimey trahsers  
And a little gorblimey 'at.  
E's got a blinking muffler  
Arahnd 'is blinking throat,  
For my old man's a fireman  
On an Elder Dempster boat."

but their leaders made no organized effort to cope with the starvation that threatened them when they did reach the trenches.

Time after time my stout colleague whom I had met at Stuttgart would show up the folly of the whole revolution. In his thirty-guinea overcoat and with his large expanse of white collar, he looked a "bloated capitalist" if ever there was one, and he used to stroll into the meetings of the local "Soviet" with a wonderful assurance, sweeping aside the sentries at the door. Probably the "Soviet" would be drafting a devastating manifesto against the "bloated capitalist," but when my colleague entered and demanded a motor-car for the next morning the "Soviet" would, figuratively speaking, stand to attention and say: "Yes, Sir. Very good, Sir."

Of course, the car (with a nice red flag on its

## WITH THE REDS IN THE RUHR

bonnet) generally failed to turn up, but that was a minor detail; it did not do away with the fact of the submissiveness of the Reds.

When I returned to Essen some twelve days later appearances had changed. Everything was shuttered up for looting, which had been announced by half the newspapers of Europe in lurid and lying telegrams from Rotterdam, Münster and Berlin from the beginning, had then begun in real earnest. Looters were being shot at sight, and we had the greatest difficulty to escape to Düsseldorf ourselves without having our car captured by roving bands of hungry Red Guards. As we left Essen from the South, the Government troops entered it from the North. The Kapp "Putsch" and its subsequent "Red Revolution" were over.

But the head waiter's alarm in the hotel in Düsseldorf when once I pulled back the restaurant curtains, and so, unthinkingly, enabled the hungry poor to see the diners and the dinner tables gave me a sharp reminder that revolution is never far away in this great industrial area, with its wan, pinched faces. The wonder of it is that the great factory of Krupp's, despite its "welfare" arrangements, has not long been blown sky-high.

## SIENA

THERE exist no words to describe Siena. Or, if they exist, they cannot be strung together in such a way as to express, for instance, the beauty and dignity of the Mangia Tower that has won for Siena world fame. It is very old—although a local guide-book states, almost contemptuously, that “it was not completed until 1349”—but its charm would still be great had it been built in the twentieth century. W. D. Howells gave some slight idea of it when he said that it seemed “to be not a monument, but a flight.” Even then, however, he conveys nothing of the principal cause of the pleasure that the Tower can give, namely the fact that it is the work of men—men who lived six centuries ago. The Pyramids and the Colosseum are impressive in their massiveness: the Mangia Tower in Siena is impressive in its spirituality.

I came through a number of quiet, tortuous streets, each flanked by palaces that were built in the days when architects realized the beauty of simplicity. It was night, but when I reached the Campo, the Mangia Tower stood out clear in the moonlight, while the tall old houses that stand round in a crescent were too much in shadow to betray traces of modernity. Seen in such circumstances, there is surely no other building in Europe that so fully arouses one to the possibilities of mankind when once it decides to develop the arts of peace instead of the so-called arts of war?

In the Grand Council Chamber of the Palazzo della Signoria, of which the Mangia Tower forms

## SIENA

one wing, is now a music hall, and as I stood in the Campo a stream of people swept out of the doors after the show. Before they came close enough to me for their twentieth century clothing to appear incongruous in these fourteenth century surroundings, I crept back into the narrow, still streets. The sound of voices and laughter that reached me might well have come from the crowd that had just learned of some new Ghibelline victory over the Guelphs of Florence. In other cities the passage of the centuries leaves its mark on the buildings and the people. In Siena it is almost as though the last six hundred years had never existed. And even motor-cars and tourists and gimcrack souvenirs cannot persuade one that this Tuscan hill city has ceased to be an important banking and business centre, ready to trade with all parts of the world, but equally ready to defend itself against the foreign invader, whosoever he may be. This atmosphere is one of the reasons of Siena's charm, and words have never yet adequately described an atmosphere.



## MADRID

MADRID is described as being "on the River Manzanares." The River Manzanares is, at most times of the year, an insignificant stream trickling along a broad, rocky bed. The women do their washing in it; otherwise it appears to have no uses and no attractions. Once, one would imagine, it had been a fine, rushing torrent, of which one could be quite proud.

The Manzanares had always seemed to me typical of Madrid—an insignificant city with a fairly interesting past and with no future. But in the last twelve years, they tell me, all has changed. The Calle de Alcalá has now the finest modern buildings in Europe and civil servants do as much work as ordinary persons in ordinary offices. The innumerable people who only came to work on pay-day have disappeared, or rather, their salaries have. Of old, even in Madrid, one lived entirely in that past when Spanish savants and Spanish soldiers had won the respect of the world. Now one talks and dreams only of a great commercial future. The old order changeth. . . .

So great is the charm of Spain that although Madrid is the least interesting city in Spain, and although the months I spent there were the most miserable I have ever spent anywhere, my main ambition at the moment is to return there. And heaven knows I saw little enough of Spain to prejudice me in its favour!

I was seventeen when I set out for Madrid to learn Spanish. Efforts to find a Spanish family which would take me in as paying guest had failed,

## MADRID

and in a moment of unwonted courage, I had decided to take no thought for the morrow and to leave for Spain at once. My mood lasted until I reached Paris. When we were half-way across the city I called on the cabby to turn round, and to drive back to the Gare St. Lazare. A minute later, feeling that less courage would be needed to continue my journey than to return to England and confess my cowardice to all my friends, I called on the cabby to turn yet again and to drive away from the Gare St. Lazare as fast as he could.

There followed unpleasant hours through France and across the desert of Northern Spain. I have vivid recollections of creeping out into the corridor several times during the night to turn off the heating apparatus, and of meeting a Spaniard creeping out to turn it on again. He was certain to be armed with knives of all shapes and sizes, I told myself, and made no further efforts to maintain a reasonable temperature in my carriage. In those days, too, I was far too timid to enter a restaurant car alone, or even to eat in public, so that my meals were confined to odd bites at sandwiches or chocolate in the corridor when I thought that nobody was looking.

The train reached Madrid late in the evening. I knew nobody, could speak only a few words of Spanish, and was vague even about the name of an hotel. Fortune was relatively favourable that evening, but the next day and the day after she refused to help me in my search for a decent family or boarding-house. I was learning no Spanish in my hotel and was spending far more than I could afford. Despair emboldened me to speak to a man I met in the Puerta del Sol—even to my untrained eyes his turned up trousers and genial air of physical well-being betrayed a fellow-countryman. I asked him if he knew of a decent house where I could get a room for a month or two.

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

For answer he told me to come along with him. He was going to a café where somebody would doubtless be able to help me. In the café were the most heterogeneous *habitués* I have ever seen in any café before or since. I verily believe it would be easier to mention the nationalities that were not represented there than those that were, and no country would have been particularly proud of its representatives. Not on account of their appearance, anyhow, for in justice to them, it must be said that most of them were better than they looked. There were three of all the crowd who were respectable—the man I had spoken to, a mysterious Englishman, who, possessing a small private fortune and the Christian name of Percy, let it be generally understood that he was a close relation of the Duke of Northumberland, and a young German business man, who deserves even more gratitude than he got for finding me a decent room in the Carrera di St. Jeronimo. Most of the other men were generally drunk and always dirty, and their very existence added, for me, to the miseries of Madrid.

Where was the Spain of my imagination? I thought I had discovered it on my first Sunday when the rumbling throng of wagons and carriages, motor-cars and mule-carts, swept me out of my hotel, as it were, and along the Calle de Alcalá towards the bull ring. For the whole afternoon I sat under the burning Spanish sun—for I could not afford one of the seats in the shade—and watched the toreadors with their bright-coloured capes, the horses and the bull, all vivid blotches of colour against the yellow sand. The excitement of the thing enthralled me, but its brutality nauseated me. Bombita killed his second bull well, and the crowd, almost delirious with excitement, hurled coats, hats, cigars, handkerchiefs into the arena, while the bodies of bull and of horses were dragged out and the dark pools of blood were

## MADRID

covered with sand. Like, I imagine, most other Englishmen, my disgust grew as bull after bull were dragged away, horse after horse was butchered, until I longed for a man to be caught and gored. But even more repulsive than the fight itself was the spectacle of women and children watching with excitement while horses were disembowelled and bulls were tormented and killed. As I walked back towards a western sky that was tinged with blood, I felt that I loathed Madrid above all places on earth.

Nor was my one financial venture calculated to cheer me up. My German friend and I had gone half-shares in a lottery ticket, which was placed in my trunk for safety. We came out of the National Library together one morning and found that the results had just been published. "What was our number?" asked my friend.

"Five eight seven eight," I replied.

"Yes, that was it." And my friend bought a list of winners. Five eight seven eight had won eighty thousand *pesetas*!

We must verify the number at once. We hailed a cab, and planned what we should each do with our forty thousand *pesetas* as we were jolted towards my room. Neither of us had even the money at the moment to pay the cabman and my friend had to borrow it from the tobacconist who supplied him with his cigarettes while I ran upstairs to fetch the ticket. I routed it out triumphantly from the bottom of my trunk, and then glared at it in dismay. Its number was seven eight five eight!

Not for weeks did I begin to see the lighter side of Madrid, did I cease to be annoyed, for example, when theatre performances that were advertised to begin at half-past nine still had not begun at ten—for I had not then learnt how the Latin races have got the best of Father Time by refusing to be his slaves. The first time I saw a man on the Puerta del Sol

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

buying cigarette ends to be reconverted into brand new cigarettes I was disgusted, the second time, I was amused. When first I went to the Royal Palace I was distressed to see these hundreds of children playing in the Palace courtyard, these soldiers leaning on their guns as they flirted with nursemaids; not until later did I appreciate the large humanity that made such things possible, or the wisdom of using field guns thus instead of putting them to the unpleasant use for which, presumably, they were designed by their makers. I developed a friendly interest in the boy bugler who was attached to the company of infantry that formed part of the Palace guard, for he had to run so hard when the company, in line, changed direction, since he was always on the outside wing. In northern countries the pivotal man would mark time while the company marched round in one straight line until it faced the new direction; how much less amusing for the onlooker than here, where the wing was left to catch up as best it could.

There was, too, the attraction of the rag market at El Rastro, the most picturesque spot in Madrid. It is very much like the Campo di Fiore in Rome only less frequented by foreigners. One man is reported to have bought an original Velazquez for a few "duros" and there are exciting tales of German professors who have bought here volumes which later they sold in London or Paris for a few hundred times as much as they gave for them—and where else are the people so credulous as to believe that a professor ever made a bargain? I confess that I never picked up anything here except fleas, but the colours and life of the Plazuela del Rastro on a Sunday morning sufficed to make me forget all my griefs and grudges against Madrid.

And then how could anybody who has once seen Segovia and has never seen Toledo not long to return to Spain?

## KING CONSTANTINE IN EXILE

I WAS just fastening on my skis outside the hotel when a Greek came out to me. "His Majesty will receive you in ten minutes in his apartments," he said.

More by chance than by intention, I found myself in January, 1920, staying in the same hotel in St. Moritz as the late King Constantine, and I felt it was my duty to interview him. But my requests for an audience had not been welcomed, and I had abandoned all hope when the *aide-de-camp* caught me at the hotel door. I took off my skis and spent the next ten minutes in a debate with myself as to whether I should wear neat black shoes or the heavy, nailed mountain boots I had on, and when Colonel Levidis came to fetch me, I had just allowed my democratic instinct to win the day, so that I tramped into the saloon wearing one of the heaviest pairs of boots that man ever made. The late King was very pleasant, very bitter against Venizelos, and very fluent in his English. In this and in subsequent interviews he delighted in using slang, and when he did not refer to his first hasty departure from Greece as "the time when the Allies kicked me out" it was only to change it to "the time when the Allies hoofed me out." Incidentally, he presented me with a large photograph of himself in uniform (signed "Constantine R.," for he never considered that he had abdicated) which I, being something of a Republican, wanted to frame and hang in my study, and which my wife, being an ardent monarchist, wanted to thrust away in a drawer.

The interview contained a good deal of new matter, and I was delighted with it. "This will be in my

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

paper on Tuesday," I told the King airily, and I went off to spend several pounds in telegraphing it. Until Tuesday's paper arrived the King was as genial as could be, and never passed me in the corridor without stopping to talk, and when the paper did arrive I saw him hurry across the room to fetch it. A few minutes later he sent an *aide-de-camp* over to tell me the interview had not appeared. "Oh, that's all right," I explained as airily as ever, "it must have been held up for some reason, and it will certainly appear to-morrow." As a matter of fact, the interview never appeared at all, and as day after day went by the King stopped less and less often in the corridor to pass the time of day. On the day before the rules of arithmetical progression would have compelled him to cut me dead I left St. Moritz altogether, but he did not forget the incident, for when I saw him the day after Venizelos lost the elections, nearly a year later, he suggested that the best thing to do would be to rewrite the earlier interview, and to see if its reception would now be more cordial, which it certainly was, for King Constantine was "news" once more.

On October 25th, 1920, knowing that King Alexander's condition was very serious I had hurried from the League of Nations Assembly in Geneva to Lucerne, where his mother and father and family were living at the Hôtel National. As I came up the steps to the hotel in the evening a boy brought in a telegram, which was handed to Colonel Levidis as he was greeting me. That telegram was the announcement of the King's death.

All night long King Constantine, Queen Sophie, and Prince Paul waited in the little bar of the hotel for the news, which their suite broke to them only in the morning in the hope that the Queen, who was resting on a *chaise longue*, would be able to sleep a little. Nothing could be more pathetic than the sight of this exiled King and Queen waiting in the

## KING CONSTANTINE IN EXILE

bar of the hotel for news of the death of their son, the occupier of the throne they looked upon as theirs. The return to the throne was possible again, but their eldest son had died hundreds of miles away from his parents. And the most pathetic part of the whole business was the way in which private grief was at once thrust aside by the political interests; half the people who arrived in Lucerne to express their sympathy were so obviously anxious only to be on the right side if the King returned to Athens.

As the elections drew nearer, the Hôtel National, generally quite empty in winter, became a very busy place. Messengers and agents arrived from Greece with despatches about popular feeling there; exiled Greek deputies and ministers crowded along for private audience; from the "Chancery" just opposite my bedroom came the continual tapping of typewriters and noise of discussion, for when as many as two Greeks get together there are certain to be noisy discussions; delegations of Greek students arrived from Geneva and other universities to swear allegiance to Constantine. The Hôtel National, in fact, might have been the scene of Daudet's "*Les Rois en Exil*."

And upstairs in his room on the second floor this particular King in exile would sit for hours with his adviser and former Foreign Minister, Monsieur Streit, working out the results of their agents' reports, and growing more and more confident of the success of the elections. Monsieur Streit was certainly the great man of the occasion, but he also looked more out of his place than any man I have ever seen. A cheery, bristle-haired, blonde Bavarian, his real place was at a *Stammtisch* in a Munich *Bierhalle*, and yet, despite the relative badness of Swiss beer, he was always good-tempered, always smiling. Possibly he was the scoundrel people would have us believe, but he was such a smiling scoundrel that nobody could take an active dislike to him, and,



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

personally, I always found him entirely straight. King Constantine, in fact, once suggested that his name had been given to his ancestors by a man who talked Cockney, but who wished to put on record their quality of uprightness!

On October 30th, well before the elections, the Greek Minister in Berne, Monsieur Kebedgy, arrived with the request of the Greek Government that Prince Paul, the youngest son, should ascend the throne. The Minister retired to another hotel to await the reply, which Colonel Levidis brought him two hours later. In those two hours there was great excitement at the National. I do not know if Prince Paul was even present when King Constantine and Monsieur Streit drafted his own reply for him, but, as his main interests in life up to then had been dancing, mixing cocktails at the bar of the hotel, and wearing an eyeglass, his absence, if absent he was, did not much matter. In the evening my colleagues and I insisted on interviewing this youth who had refused a throne, for our editors would not be content merely with the written refusal of the crown which had already been handed out to us. It was a painful interview, preceded and ended by a painfully hearty handshake; the Prince was very embarrassed, and to every question we asked him he pointed to his typewritten refusal and replied: "It's on the paper." Obviously Monsieur Streit had warned him to be very careful of such dangerous fellows as we were, and I am convinced that had we asked him where he had learned to dance so well he would have replied that it was on the paper containing the text of his refusal of the Greek throne. When the news of the offer of the throne leaked out hardly one woman between the ages of sixteen and sixty could be found in the whole of Lucerne who did not declare that she had danced at least once with the Prince.

A fortnight later came the result of the elections

## KING CONSTANTINE IN EXILE

in Greece. The King's supporters had scored a huge victory, and Monsieur Venizelos became an exile *à son tour*. There was little for us to do but await the departure and pick up what items of gossip one could. Princess Helen kindly got herself engaged to the Crown Prince of Rumania (with whom she always talked English when we were there and German when we were not). Princess Eileen, far prettier than her sister, was naïvely proud of her "good-byyyye," and Prince Paul would exercise his long legs tearing downstairs and check himself into a dignified walk when he had the misfortune to meet one of us. The only member of the family with whom we did not feel like spectres at a wedding feast was a rather pathetic, pale little figure of seven, who might be found any morning early picking out tunes with one finger on the piano—Princess Catherine. A dear, dainty little girl, with delightful manners and a still more delightful way of talking English, for whom one wishes a happier lot than that of a queen.

But our newspapers could not be expected to be contented for a month with gossip about the number of the King's trunks or with our spending the whole day playing a game with a cork, surmounted by a pile of coppers, in the centre of a small circle chalked on the billiard table. So two of us went one morning and told Monsieur Streit that we wanted to interview the Queen. Impossible, he told us; the Queen never gave interviews. It was unpleasant, but we brought pressure to bear on Monsieur Streit, and he hurried upstairs, to return in a few minutes with the news that the Queen would receive us. Only as she never gave interviews and did not want to be worried by other journalists, we were to see her in the corridor of the hotel and to word out telegrams in such a way that it would appear that we had met her and the King quite by chance, and that the King had presented us to her.

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

We had nothing particular to ask the Queen, so we went to the bar for a vermouth while we planned the lines of the interview. It was only later that we discovered that, owing to a misunderstanding of Monsieur Streit's English, the King and Queen had been pacing impatiently up and down the corridor for half an hour waiting for us to finish our discussion and our vermouth. However, the misunderstanding was finally explained away, and the interview took place. The King was, as usual, hearty and democratic, but with the Queen it was different. She spoke in excellent English, of course, seeing that her own mother was English, but so softly that it was almost impossible to hear what she said. Despite her husband's successful efforts to be democratic, she seemed to have retained some illusions about the divine rights of Kings and Queens, and every time we approached her to hear what she said, she withdrew a little. So that for most of the interview we were going round after her in a circle, whose centre was King Constantine!

A few days before King Constantine left for Greece we had another interview with him, and a very important one too. For in it he set out to prove that he had always been pro-Ally, but had had to appease the Kaiser in order to save his own country from invasion. He explained, with frequent references to a piece of paper in front of him, that Greece had offered on four different occasions to come into the War on the side of the Allies, and his explanations certainly sounded very convincing. And he was a man who carried conviction, for his big, grey-blue eyes looked absolutely honest. The most noticeable feature about him were the huge head and the large protruding ears, but you forgot all about them when he leant across the table, talking eagerly, earnestly, and quickly, and thumping the mahogany with his fist to emphasize his points. During that interview

## KING CONSTANTINE IN EXILE

he held me absolutely convinced that he had been wrongly treated until someone happened to ask what had been the conditions that Greece had made to the Allies for her participation. He studied the scrap of paper carefully, but did not find what he wanted, so he waved the question away with a: "You cannot expect me to remember all the details," and I wondered if the King were but a six-foot-tall figure-head for the policy of Messrs. Streit and Theotokis.

On December 14th, 1920, despite a telegram from a Greek Socialist in Chicago "commanding" him to abdicate, the King set out for Greece. An Italian aviation company had offered him two areoplanes in case he did not want to make the journey by train; a telegram from Spain had promised him a bodyguard of twenty Spaniards for protection; and one man wrote that he was absolutely invulnerable, and that if the King would attach him to his staff with a good salary, His Majesty would be free from all danger. But the departure was as dull and unromantic as it could be—by hotel omnibus to the station, and by train to Venice. Someone had spread flowers and branches all over the stairs of the hotel, to the imminent danger of the King and Queen as they came down, and the hotel staff and the twelve visitors who were left came to the doors to see them off, while a few score of people had collected at the station. But they were less interested in this return of a king to his kingdom than in an American journalist who was seated on a suitcase in the very middle of the entrance hall, typing out a last telegram with his "Corona" perched precariously on somebody's luggage. When royal exiles begin their return home in a station omnibus, the romance of kings and kingery is dead.

Venice was as horrible as it could be when we reached it. In the bitter wind that swept down the narrow canals and froze us to the marrow after our very depressing and dirty journey, the Campanile

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

looked like a gigantic factory chimney, and the cathedral of St. Mark like a drop-scene in a provincial music hall; the old weather-worn *palazzi* would have shamed Balham or Clapham. It has needed several beautiful days in Venice since to wipe out the bad impression that that first visit made upon me. When I looked out of my hotel window early next morning as the Greek National Anthem came across the waters from the *Averoff* on its homeward journey, I found Venice an inch deep in slushy snow.

All my colleagues had set out for Athens on a little steamer called the *Yperochi* chartered for them by the Greek Government, in order that they might describe Constantine's arrival in Athens. The *Averoff* was to go round the Peleponnese, while the *Yperochi* slipped through the Corinth Canal in order to arrive off Phaleron before the King. So much for the programme, but my envy of my colleagues disappeared entirely when I heard later that the *Yperochi* had nearly been shipwrecked in a terrible storm, that she had put into Valona for safety, and that she had finally arrived at Athens when everything was over, including the cheering.

Two years later I saw King Constantine again in Italy during the Fascisti *coup d'état*. He was standing on a station platform trying to persuade a group of Black Shirts that he must be allowed to return to his family in Sicily, and they were treating him with scant respect. Again an exile and a failure, he was less upright than of old, a rather pathetic figure, within a few weeks of his death at Palermo. Whatever else he was, he was a King who knew how to charm.

## “GASPERS” IN CLUJ

IN the old days before the War the capital of Transylvania was known as Kolozsvár by the Hungarians and Klausenberg by the Austrians. The Peace Treaty gave Transylvania back to the Rumanians, and its capital is now officially known by its Rumanian name of Cluj. It presents even greater varieties than its name would lead one to expect. In the centre of the main square stands a magnificent thirteenth century cathedral built by the Saxons. In front of this stand two monuments. One is in memory of a heroic Emperor who is claimed by the Rumanians as a Rumanian and by the Hungarians as a Hungarian. The other represents Romulus, Remus and their wolf—a gift from the city of Rome to symbolize the Rumanian, and hence Latin, origin of Cluj. All day long through the streets of the city pass Jews in old fur coats, peasants in Rumanian or Hungarian national costumes, and nondescripts whose nationality would remain a mystery even to a tout on a Paris boulevard. To the different languages and dialects there seems no end.

I sat at a café table smoking “gaspers” and musing on the history of Cluj-Klausenberg-Kolozsvár, until the time came for me to catch my train. The head waiter was a surly-looking man who showed no enthusiasm for a generous tip. Suddenly, however, he leant over my table and asked, with the utmost affability, whether I had enjoyed my coffee. Then he smiled broadly, ingratiatingly. I thought I had

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

tipped him too heavily, but it was not that. He sniffed very audibly and then sighed in ecstasy. "An English cigarette," he murmured.

I gave him two "gaspers" and he vanished joyfully. There is a duty of two hundred per cent. on the import of foreign cigarettes into Rumania, and he had not tasted a Virginian cigarette since the War. Five or six waiters rushed up to help me on with my coat, to hand me my hat. They shook their heads when I offered them banknotes—to no great amount, it is true—but they were embarrassingly grateful when I handed them each a cigarette. I left Cluj with an empty cigarette-case, but with a comforting feeling that here, at any rate, I had increased the popularity of the British Empire.

## LAGO DI BRACCIANO

THERE seems nothing very amusing in the idea of catching a train at six o'clock on a Sunday morning. The Italian Government does all it can to discourage you, for it takes off nearly all the trains on Sunday and puts up the fares.

But if once you have been to the Lake of Bracciano for a summer day you will probably go again. Besides, the increase in the fares is not serious since journalists receive, or did receive until the advent of Mussolini, their railway tickets at one quarter the normal price. Perhaps I should say the abnormal price, for few travellers have no claim to a reduction. Members of Parliament, if I remember rightly, can travel free of charge wherever and whenever they like, while members of their families pay very reduced fares. On the Rome-Naples line, for example, the first-class traveller who paid his full fare—before the Mussolini *régime*, remember—was regarded with curiosity and a certain contempt by everybody, including the railway officials themselves.

So that for a few pence we could catch the Sunday train on the two-hour, twenty-five mile run through the Campagna Romana to Bracciano. Nearly every yard of the way has its own historical associations; here is Monte Mario, of considerable historical interest but now chiefly notable for the struggle between the Methodists who want to build an enormous place of worship at its summit and the



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

Roman Catholics who want to prevent any such thing, since St. Peter's, at the foot of Monte Mario, would be overshadowed. Beyond, are the Villa of Livia, mother of the Emperor Tiberius, and the Saxa Rubra where Constantine the Great, miraculously converted to Christianity, defeated Maxentius. On the right are the ruins of Veii, the nearest Etruscan town to Rome, where the whole family of the Fabii was massacred. Now, fortunately, there is nothing more formidable than an occasional tourist to disturb the shepherd and his sheep—it was not far from Veii that I once discovered an old shepherd, seated on a tufa rock in the middle of his flock, reading "Orlando Furioso." Imagine an English shepherd, despite a relatively adequate educational system, reading, say, Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus!"

And then Bracciano, with its wonderful mediaeval castle, standing in graceful massiveness on the very lip of the crater which forms the circular lake. The one street, from the station to the castle, is crowded, for everyone is doing his Sunday shopping. Stalls of oranges and lemons and weak lemonade alternate with roasting pigs revolving slowly on spits. Here and there are great piles of green water melons with crimson centres, and twigs over the doors of the *osterie* proclaim the fact that the new wine is on draught—and the red wine of Bracciano is rightly famous. Although it is not yet nine o'clock, it is too hot to climb to the old stronghold of the Orsinis', and the Lake is gleaming invitingly below.

A little path leads down through the vineyards and olive orchards to the water's edge and the so-called bathing establishment. A rickety place, if ever there was one, with little cabins made chiefly out of the wings of scrapped aeroplanes. When the proprietor sees us coming, he pushes out a leaky old boat and hurries off to catch the fish for our lunch, and his wife gets busy with strong-tasting spaghetti, strong-

## LAGO DI BRACCIANO

tasting salad and strong-tasting cheese. At eleven o'clock his daughter comes along the beach to where, protected by sheets from the sun, we are plucking up the courage for another swim. In one hand she has a tray with the most primitive glasses I have ever seen, in the other our especial bottle of vermouth. We feel like the Roman patricians who used to have their villas round the lake—only they, presumably, were inferior to us in having no vermouth. Until the sun sinks down towards the edge of the crater we lie around in the water or on the sand, as happily lazy as human beings could be. And when we do our accounts at the end of the day we discover that we have bought that almost inestimable thing—a few hours of entire peace—and a very passable lunch all for something under half-a-crown.

The Lake is nearly twenty miles in circumference and experts are not decided as to whether it is a crater or merely the result of volcanic subsidence. Personally I always tell people that it is an extinct crater as it sounds more poetic. In any case it is rather difficult to dive to the bottom for pennies as the Lake is well over five hundred feet deep. Water from it supplies one of the principal fountains in Rome, and when one of our party lost his towel in the water we advised him to wait for it by the Acqua Paola fountain in Rome. He treated our advice as most people treat most advice, and the result is that he is still without his towel. It serves him right.

I have only one unpleasant recollection of Bracciano. The first of the two return trains to Rome had been taken off unexpectedly, and I had to telephone some important news to Milan at eight o'clock that evening. There was no way out of it except to hire a trap and to drive back the twenty-five miles to Rome.

I remember little of that journey. In one place there were three or four small trees near the road and

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

I believe I tried to leave the cart to shelter under them. In another, the wheel came off and I had to hold up the confounded cart while the driver put it on again. My handkerchief on the back of my neck seemed to make no difference to the heat of the sun. The sun seemed to like it, in fact.

When I reached the Porta del Popolo I went to one of Rome's thousand bootblacks to get some of the Etrurian dust taken off me. Suddenly the hot pavement flew up and hit me on the forehead, a benevolent crowd of people snatched me up and took me to the nearest chemist, and someone pushed a bottle of atrocious smelling salts beneath my nose. I had the inevitable *insolazione*, but within an hour was well enough to prepare my masterpiece for Milan. As far as I remember, my paper had no room to print it after all. And do you think anyone, even the chemist with his smelling salts would take a *soldo* for his kindness? The bootblack *did* accept an extra large tip the next time he cleaned my shoes, but never before were shoes so carefully polished, no, not even in Italy, where clean shoes are of far greater importance than a clean collar or a clean face. Italians may rob you when you are wealthy, but they are always correspondingly generous when you are poor or in difficulties. When they rob me, I try to console myself with the thought that they are probably only doing so because they wish to help somebody else. It is an indirect compliment to my prosperous appearance.

On that one day in Bracciano I had gone out in the sun for two or three minutes without my sheet over my bare shoulders. I paid for my folly in blisters—great black blisters that made it a torture to put on clothes and an impossibility to sleep on my back or my side for more than a fortnight! *Experientia docet stultos.*

## ON SKIS

I BELIEVE some people go to Switzerland in winter for the skating, tobogganing and curling. Why, when they might be ski-ing, I cannot understand. The first time I tried ski-ing in decent snow was at St. Moritz, and the sensation was so wonderful that I went up and down a paltry little slope so many times that I was terribly sick in the evening from over-fatigue. And while I was being sick I was thanking heaven that it was dark outside and that I was therefore not losing any precious time on my skis.

I have tried many sensations from falling in love at the age of five to flying above the Alps in an aeroplane, but nothing has given me that excitement that you feel when you come out on to a *col* amidst the dark blue pine woods and see far below you the chalets and hotels of your destination. The sun is so hot that you wish you had not even your sweater on, and yet the snow is still of the finest powder that flies up in a cloud of dust behind your skis; the shadow of the pines is a deep blue; down in the valley are scores of busy ants—people in coloured jumpers hurrying up and down the toboggan run. The air is so clear that you can hear their voices, but otherwise there is not a sound. The sky is an Italian sky in summer. And as far as eye can reach are mountain peaks, dazzling white, blue, black. God, what a world!

And then you begin to move. You are super-human. Faster and faster you go, thrilling with pride—or fear?—when you retain your balance over a bad

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

dip, shouting to yourself in your excitement. Let others cut figures on the rink or rush down the bob-run. They know where the ice is bad or the bend is dangerous. They are prepared, but you are on unknown territory, for almost as far as you can see the snow is virgin and shows no track of another ski. In a few weeks the snow will have gone and the slope will be an ordinary Swiss hillside, covered with vivid green grass and dotted here and there by the most wonderful of flowers, the vernal gentians, but for the moment the slope, rather terrifyingly steep, it is true, is placed there for your especial benefit, in order that you may satiate your passion for speed. You can make your own pace, you can dodge in and out of the woods, you can—if you are an expert—jump. You can go as fast over the ground as an engine would take you, and yet you are balanced only on two narrow, long strips of wood. And if you fall, well, you will get up and start again. One moment you are a thousand feet above the village, and the next, you are covering yourself in powder snow as you swish round to a standstill in an abrupt telemarck, within a few yards of disaster on the ice run.

And then down through the village street, gay with sledges coming back from tailing parties, with women in vivid jumpers doing their shopping on their way home from the rink, with ridiculous urchins clattering about on the hard snow on skis or rushing past on scooters that scoot on runners instead of wheels—down the hill to your favourite tea shop. A large room with unvarnished walls, where men in rough sweaters and girls in khaki breeches, with clots of snow still clinging to their puttees, drink tea and eat cakes and dance, in heavy hob-nailed boots, to the latest jazz music of London and Paris, until the time comes for them to return to their hotels to dress for dinner and for the ball that is to follow.

Your contempt for mere mortals who only skate o

## ON SKIS

curl or toboggan dwindles away in the evening, and you slip on "snobbutts" over your dress shoes to join them at whatever hotel happens to be having a gala night. You frankly enjoy dancing with pleasantly gowned women who have never worn skis in their life, or listening to the day's news which reaches you from London, Birmingham or Paris through hundreds of miles of space and a "loud speaker" in the hotel lounge. You are, perhaps, less interested in the downfalls of ministries or the speeches of Prime Ministers than you should be, for you are engaged on the more important business of reviewing the day's run, but there is something impressive in the thought that three hours ago you were in a snow laden pine forest a thousand miles from civilization, and now you are leaning back in a comfortable armchair listening to people talking in London or singing in Paris. . . .

One might imagine, from my account of it, that I was an expert ski-runner. Must I, in the interests of truth, confess that I have never willingly jumped a foot on skis in my life, and that an eight mile run down moderate slopes is the limit of my capabilities? But what does that matter? I have had enough ski-ing to know that there is nothing—not even bathing on a bright, rough day in Cornwall—that gives you that wonderful feeling of strength and exhilaration. I know enough of ski-ing to thank God that I know even as much as I do.

## VIENNA

VIENNA is not the place it was before the War. Even the railway porter who carries your luggage on arrival explains this to you with a half-apologetic shrug of his shoulders. The waiters confirm it, and the shopkeepers insist upon it with tears in their eyes.

It is not even quite the strange place my guide book would have had me believe. According to this book, for example, one of the rivulets which passes through Vienna "springs at the Galitzin mountain," and it then "flows off subterrenously into the Danube Canal within the township." Furthermore, my passport, as far as I know, bears on it nothing so interesting as the "passage-sifting remark" which, we are warned, is essential for visitors. I brought into Austria a bottle of mineral water, but it got me into no trouble for "underlying the mineral-water monopoly," and nobody at the station in Vienna asked me for "contributory eatables," as Grieben's Guide-Book had assured me would be the case. Possibly my "hunting equipage" might have attracted attention, but I had not brought it with me.

My interest had been aroused by a reference to "beer for keeping," but this is only a too-literal translation of "Lager Bier," while "drawn off-beer" is "Abzugbier." "Propelling cars," I found, were trams, and "the horse-sport" is nothing more exciting than horse-racing. It is true that "the football sport has risen very much in Vienna," but this is not necessarily an attraction, and I am still in ignorance as to "light athletics which are being cultivated by

## VIENNA

several sporting associations." The "high water-spouts" sound intriguing, but they are merely fountains, and a street "where the most fashionable life is pulsing," looked, to me at any rate, much like any other street.

This chapter is supposed to be about Vienna, but I am tempted to quote a few more passages from my guide-book. With an "official guide apt to serve as a cicerone," we may visit the Wienerwald (or "Vienna woodland"), which is "a vast pleasure-ground not seeming able to hold the great number of wandering and encamping people." We can go to the mountains on which, "where a ditch interrupts the slope or a steep path is crossing it, the steel or wood-sleighs will be seen racing down." We can even cultivate the "boby-sport"—when we have found out what it is.

In the National Library we shall find "Minerva, destroying Envy and Ignorance on the attic"; in the Schottenkirche we shall be impressed by "the splendid architectonical raising of the High Altar," and, within a few hundred yards of each other, we can visit the "family vault of House Habsburg" and the "church of the non-united Greek." The Stadtpark has "a pretty little weather-box, showing meteorological news." But for real interest we must visit the surroundings of Vienna, where are "excellent vine-yards with their high culture," "splendid beer," and restaurants with "ritual cooking." At Mödling, for example, there is an alpine garden where "the bright-dressed children of the mountain Flora are especially in spring a charming aspect." Elsewhere there are "widely comprehending views" and "well-trodden flat paths," and we are advised to admire the Semmering railway from Adlitzgraben "from whence one can observe its leaning-on to the grand nature."

No, Vienna is not so amazing a spot as this guide-book would lead one to expect. But it still remains the most attractive capital in Europe. Officials



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

perform miracles on miserable pensions, women are smart but a little threadbare, the luxuries for which Vienna used to be famous remain in the shop windows, there are hundreds of beggars with sunken cheeks and feverish eyes, there is every symptom of misery and depression. And yet, there is no misery and depression. Even the Prussian-like policemen are ready to smile, to laugh, on the least provocation.

The Vienna of cabarets and dancing halls is, it is true, a little sad, since there are so few foreigners, and these "Lokale" are so expensive. Why should you frequent glaring wine restaurants, where you can pay up to a million crowns for a bottle of champagne, when you can hear an excellent orchestra or dance to your heart's content for the price of a cup of coffee? Frau Sacher still sits in her study where the walls are crowded with autographed photographs of the royal and aristocratic celebrities who used to haunt her world-famed restaurant. She still smokes her cigars all day long, and she still lets her guests know painfully plainly whether they are *'personæ gratæ* or not. At Sacher's one can almost believe that Vienna has never changed, that there has been no war, that the palaces are not being converted into flats for officials who can find no other homes, that old Franz Josef is still alive, that the map of Europe is still as it was when we were at school.

No, Vienna has changed, and changed for the worse. But even now one loves it as one loves no other great city. The Parisian welcomes you because you have money in your pocket; the Viennese does not worry about your money, but about your mood. He has put up with miserable privations for ten years, and even now he cannot be sure that the League of Nations' reconstruction scheme is going to bring him prosperity and peace. He has every reason to be depressed and depressing. But he takes no account of reasons.

## VIENNA

On a Sunday I found myself on the Wiener Wald, on a spur of the hills from which I could look out through the trees to the Danube and the city. I had come there to be sentimental, to muse on the collapse of the empire which the Hapsburgs had built up so clumsily and yet so amazingly, to think how miserable was the plight in which the Viennese now found themselves. But along every path came young men with guitars, singing girls, good *bourgeois* mothers and fathers. Throughout the day I hunted, in vain, for one miserable face. And the fact that there was not one does not mean that there is no hardship in Vienna, but rather that the Viennese refuse to be depressed by their hardships. They grumble with a vengeance, but they are quite ready to smile or sing.

We are inclined to treat the Austrian with a tolerant contempt. He is, we feel, too light-hearted; he does not take life seriously enough. There is probably truth in this, and yet London, with all its population, with all its wealth, with all its pompous solemnity and seriousness, can give us nothing to rival the Viennese Opera House, the productions of Bernard Shaw or Shakespeare, or the Mozart concerts in the Redoutensaal. And even in the prosperous days before 1914 we never laughed and sang as the Viennese laugh and sing in their difficulties of to-day. One is not quite sure that there is not a certain amount of heroism about Vienna and the Viennese. At any rate there is a great deal of charm.

## THE GENOA CONFERENCE

I CAME out of the pleasant building on the edge of the cliffs, which the Italian Government had converted temporarily into an hotel for journalists attending the Conference, and walked down the road to a green seat overlooking the port. I had arrived at seven o'clock in the morning, and was waiting until such time as the organizers of the Conference were likely to be in their offices. When I got up from the seat to go towards these offices I discovered, from the remarks of the passers-by, that I had a series of green stripes across the back of my suit.

The whole of Genoa, in fact, was brushed and burnished and swept for the International Economic Conference. Every seat and letter-box in the town was repainted, the palm trees were clipped and pruned, hundreds of carabinieri and military policemen were brought from different parts of the country, raids were held in all the low haunts of the city and the more suspicious characters were escorted to their homes or put under arrest, the façades of the houses were painted, and orders were issued to the effect that on no account must washing, the speciality of Genoa, be hung in places where it might offend the eyes of the delegates as they drove through the streets. In the Via Balbi, where was the Royal Palace, the seat of the Conference, life was made horrible for foot passengers by dozens of carabinieri whose duty it was to make people walk only on the right side of the road, the tramcars were stopped, and motor-cars that were not marked with the magic letters "C.G." had to make a *détour* round by the harbour in order to get from the town to the station. A special station was

## THE GENOA CONFERENCE

built beneath the Royal Palace for the benefit of the delegates who came in by train from the suburbs, and business men wept tears over the delay to their trucks of coal or merchandise.

And with all that the Genoese and their government were always polite, always pleasant, and ever ready to help you when you produced the magic card bearing the words "Conferenza Economica Internazionale." They built an enormous gallery in the Palazzo San Giorgio for the Press, which did not fall down despite the prophecies of the pessimists and the weight of several hundreds of journalists; they gave receptions at which Monsieur Tchicherin and his Russian colleagues were able to turn up in tail coats and white ties to sign autograph albums for the fair daughters of the Genoese merchants; they organized dinners and luncheons at which the Russians met the King of Italy and drank champagne and exchanged autographed *menu* cards with the Archbishop of Genoa; they placed men in imposing uniforms outside every hotel where delegates were hidden away; they redecorated a large *palazzo* as "Casa della Stampa," with telephones and telegraphs and a bar for the journalists; they allowed themselves to be run over with greatest good humour by the delegates' motor-cars; they even supplied the cars for the purpose, free of charge, to the British, French and Belgian delegations; and they commandeered hotels all along the coast as far as Rapallo and put several steam rollers on the road to repair it and to thrill the delegates when their cars swept round the corners and found the road blocked by one of these leviathans. The mayor of Genoa even went so far as to approach the Committee of the English Club, a week before the Conference opened, to ask if there were any golfers who could help construct a course, since he had heard that Mr. Lloyd George always wanted to play golf. The course could not be made in time, and I

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

like to think, for his peace of mind, that the Mayor did not recognize the golf clubs which were conspicuous amongst the British Premier's luggage as it lay on the station platform on his arrival.

In the Royal Palace they built lifts and installed tea rooms. Where the throne in the Throne Room should have been there was a telephone on a table, and the King's and Queen's suites were turned into homes for Italian delegates, so that they could splash about in baths one of which had the black eagle of Savoy above it and the other, a number of naked cupids, with "M.R." and a crown stamped on various parts of their little bodies. In one room of the University, British officials gave out "dope" to British journalists, and in another the Soviet delegate, Monsieur Rakovsky, gave professional lectures, chiefly on the French Revolution, to the Press of the world, which had generally had to wait at least an hour for him in the hope that he would bring some real news for once in a way. In short, the Genoa Conference was far better organized than any other International Peace Conference, not excluding that of Paris.

For all that, Genoa was a dull place and the Conference was a horrible Conference. The only amusement was an invention of rumours, and one day two British journalists kept the whole Conference busy and excited by inventing a secret treaty between the Bolsheviks and Hungarians. Tchicherin refused to deny the alleged treaty and the Hungarians were openly delighted, since it was the first time since the beginning of the Conference that anybody had taken any notice of them at all.

Indeed, the efforts of the smaller nations to draw attention to themselves were rather pathetic. When one delegation gave a tea to the Press another would give a cinematograph show to illustrate the beauties of its native land. When three gave a tea the same afternoon the rivalry must have nearly led to

## THE GENOA CONFERENCE

diplomatic ruptures. And I myself was nearly the cause of an international incident. I had motored over to Nervi to the hotel of the Austrian delegation as I had an appointment with the Austrian Chancellor, Dr. Schober, at noon. I arrived before he did and as the hotel manager pointed out that the late Monsieur Stambulisky, the peasant premier of Bulgaria, was also living in the hotel, I thought I might as well kill two premiers with one visit, and therefore sent out my card to a group of Bulgarians on the lawn. For some time I waited and nothing happened—evidently Stambulisky was not on the lawn with the others as I had imagined—and then I heard a motor-car coming up the drive. Dr. Schober descended from it, and as he entered the hotel by one door and came towards me, the Bulgarian Prime Minister entered it by another door and came towards me. Apparently he had been for a walk by the sea when I had sent out my card, a secretary had rushed along the coast to tell him a British journalist had come to see him, and he had rushed back to be seen. The moment was painful, and my attempts at explanation were feeble so that it was in trepidation that I went in to see Monsieur Stambulisky, who was certainly one of the most savage looking men in Europe, after I had interviewed, and lunched with, Dr Schober. And not for many years shall I forget the way in which the two statesmen glared at each other over my humble head.

Incidentally, I have no knowledge of Bulgarian, but I am fairly sure that it is not three or four times shorter than shorthand. At the last plenary session of the Conference, when we were all growing tired and hungry and hoping for the end, Monsieur Stambulisky rose and made a speech in Bulgarian. Everybody was furious, but we breathed satisfaction when he sat down again after about two minutes. At any rate, we thought, he had the sovereign virtue of brevity. Then

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

Miss Stancioff, his incredibly competent secretary, read out the translation into French and English, and the translation took fully a quarter of an hour to read. Unless the Prime Minister's speech was a "fake," I would suggest the adoption of Bulgarian, with no translations, at all future international conferences.

One deserves forgiveness for objecting to Monsieur Stambulisky for making a speech, for the plenary sessions were certainly the most terrible and tiring plenary sessions of any conference since the War. The only people who aroused the vaguest interest were Mr. Lloyd George, who always came in late like a society leader at the opera, the Germans, and the Bolsheviks. And even the Bolsheviks became boring when Tchicherin spoke five times in a single session, especially since he did not even look the part. This ordinary-looking, blackcoated *bourgeois*, with his thin, piercing voice and his straggling beard, was so remote from the "bloodstained Bolshevik" we had been led to expect that the elegant ladies who crowded to the plenary sessions in search of sensation as they crowded to the Landru trial must have gone home bitterly disappointed. The other Russians were no better. Worowsky was for all the world like a mild professor of philosophy, Litvinof's little eyes gleaming behind his glasses betrayed nothing more revolutionary than a sense of humour, and Krassin would have been taken everywhere for what he is—a clever, well-to-do man of business.

It was only in their own fastnesses that the Russians were interesting—their hotel at Santa Margherita was so closely guarded, and there was something so attractively ironical in the idea of their being billeted in the Hôtel Imperial, of Tchicherin living in the imperial suite (at a cost of something like nine and a quarter million roubles a day) where the King and Queen of Italy and so many other persons of royal blood have stayed, of the Duke of Pistoia hurrying

## THE GENOA CONFERENCE

to other quarters for diplomatic reasons the day before the Russians arrived. Behind every palm or eucalyptus or wistaria branch in the hotel garden there seemed to be the blue and red uniform of a carabineer and a few hundred yards off the Casino lay an Italian warship with its guns pointing ominously landwards. At the garden gate were sentries and policemen and it was quite a feat to get past even them unless you were one of the few regular visitors who were allowed to remain on in the hotel as a special concession—including two pretty young Countesses who were to be seen strolling about the garden, and who found their way unwittingly into newspapers all the world over as "Bolshevik lady secretaries in silk stockings." In the garden and hall of the hotel you always found an odd mixture of aristocratic visitors, Bolshevik delegates, journalists from seven or eight different countries and secret police. And if you waited there for four or five hours there might be an opportunity of seeing Tchicherin for a moment. Indeed it became quite the thing to do to motor to the Hôtel Imperial at Santa Margherita to take tea and see the Bolsheviks.

The Hôtel Imperial has one horrible recollection for me. On Easter Monday there was little or no work to do, for no Commissions were meeting. So, with two friends, I took the afternoon off and motored to Rapallo to visit the Casino. On my way my conscience pricked me. One could never be sure that there was no news. At any rate, I would drop in at the Russians' Hôtel to make sure they had no news. My colleagues objected, but finally gave in on condition that I would not keep them waiting more than a few minutes. Without difficulty we saw Litvinof, who talked about nothing for some time and then, as we rose to go, suddenly referred to relations between Germany and Russia. We pricked up our ears, and, after a great deal of hesitation, Litvinof



## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

told us the outline of the treaty with the Germans which had been signed secretly the day before in the very room in which we were sitting. Nobody in Genoa would know it until the next day, he said, and he made us promise that we would not tell anybody in the town. Naturally, that was the very last thing we wanted to do, for we had the biggest "scoop" of the Conference. I saw in my imagination the headlines in the paper above my exclusive story. My conscience had been a splendid guide.

There was, of course, no more thought of the Casino. Only a journalist, too, can understand our agony when we were held up at each of the many level-crossings by trains. We almost went on our knees to the watchmen to persuade them to open the gates and let us slip through. To-morrow all the world would know of the treaty: now, we alone knew, and we must get the news to our respective papers as soon as possible.

Finally our car reached Genoa and tore up the Via Venti Settembre. We had no desire to meet our colleagues, for we must not betray our "scoop." But we found it did not matter so much, for every colleague we met had a copy of the actual text of the treaty, the gist of which we alone were supposed to know! The Germans had distributed it to everyone they saw at midday. We were too mortified to weep.

The real Russian Headquarters was not in the Hôtel Imperial, but at Room One in the Hôtel de Gênes. It was an enormous bedroom with Empire furniture and with a double bed behind a screen in an alcove. The basins always contained purple water from the cyclostyle machine which was used to duplicate the daily Russian note. The carpet and tables were always spotted and smeared with tobacco ash, and the bed was always covered with papers. On every article of furniture was a notice in four languages—a notice which should bring blushes to the

## THE GENOA CONFERENCE

*bourgeois* who entered the room and apparently took souvenirs off with them—"Please take away nothing without asking for it." At two typewriters, placed the one on a rickety table and the other on a washstand, two girl typists were always busy on some Soviet document or other. And the air was generally so thick with tobacco smoke that you could scarcely see across the room.

If Room One was strange, its frequenters were far stranger. At every moment the door from the corridor would open to admit some new visitor. In one corner of the room a black-bearded Italian Communist, who had spent seven years of the last ten in prison, would be trying to persuade four or five journalists that Tchicherin was too busy to receive them. In another corner a stout German would be whispering mysterious details about oil or coal concessions into the ears of a Russian secretary. In another would be two society ladies who had come on one excuse or another in the hope of seeing one of the more important Russians, who hurried through the room from time to time. There would generally be a cartoonist or two, hoping to catch Tchicherin or Rakovsky. Everywhere talk of concessions and notes, and glances of envy at the more fortunate visitors who were admitted through the second door into the Holy of Holies, where leaders of the delegation, the *pezzi grossi*, as the Italians would say, sat at work. And nobody more proud than the *bourgeois* journalist whom Tchicherin would shake by the hand or to whom he would mutter a few words of greeting when he came in. Room One at the Hôtel de Gênes was the most topsy-turvy room, the most revolutionary room, in the world.

There is one town in Italy where the name of Tchicherin will long be remembered with profound antipathy. Immediately after the Genoa Conference the municipality of Florence invited the foreign

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

journalists on a trip to the City of Florence to visit three important exhibitions there. The train reached Pisa during the night. Immediately a number of young men jumped on to the platform and ordered the people there to make way for "His Excellency." They let it be understood that they were members of the Tcheka, and that the little German journalist they were escorting to the buffet was none other than Tchicherin himself. The news spread as quickly as that sort of news habitually does spread, and in a moment or two the stationmaster ran up, all apologies that he had made no preparations for the visitor since Genoa had failed to warn him of his arrival. With miraculous speed all the town authorities arrived at the station, and they insisted that a strong guard of honour should be put on the train. Tchicherin, however, refused, saying that he had no confidence in *bourgeois* guards, and preferred his Tcheka.

Finally the Fascisti heard of the visit, and expressed their disgust that the Russian leader should thus be allowed to travel about in Italy at his own sweet will. The railwaymen took the Russians' defence and threatened to kill anyone who tried to harm them. In order to prevent trouble the station was occupied by the military, and at every station along the line to Florence were guards and local authorities. The latter were told that the Russian leader who had been working all day, was asleep, and could not be disturbed.

When the journalists reached Florence early in the morning, they found soldiers in the streets and authorities on the platform. Where was Tchicherin, they were asked. At Genoa, they answered. Perhaps, they suggested, innocently, to the amazed authorities, someone had been playing a practical joke.

And so ended the Genoa Conference!

# THE ETERNAL CITY

THERE are two ways of seeing such a city as Rome. One is to buy a Baedeker (or some other guide if your patriotism impels you to do so) and to carry it round with you wherever you go; the other is to buy a Baedeker (with the same reservation as to your patriotism) and to leave it at home. In the former case you see all that you ought to see; in the latter case you see Rome.

The process of seeing Rome is simple. You look at the map for five minutes and decide that you will visit, say, the Baths of Caracalla. As soon as you are outside the door you decide that you will explore instead of paying a formal visit to the baths. You take a landmark—probably the monument to Victor Emmanuel, which would be magnificent in any city but Rome, where it is abominable because it is so new—and you set out in the opposite direction. After walking for twenty minutes you strike off at a right-angle, and gradually work round to your landmark. If you have to ask the way, you have lost the game. If you don't, you feel justified in treating yourself to a drink. In this way you see Rome and you satisfy that savage instinct within you to get to know your surroundings. No animal would make a new home without immediately exploring all the ways of access to it; no human being should be in a strange city for a week without having been in almost every street.

This occupation is particularly fascinating in Rome, because history jumps at you so unexpectedly.

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

Starting from the station you naturally go down the Via Nazionale, which is obviously a main thoroughfare. Rome, you feel, is much like any other city except for the fact that people who sell hot chestnuts are provided with large feather fans to encourage the charcoal to do its duty. Also, if you wander at all from the straight and narrow road you will discover, to your disappointment, that one of the meaner streets has been dedicated to Balbus. Seeing that "Balbus built a wall" was the first thing you ever learnt in Latin, you feel that he might have been more honoured. The street, as is the custom of streets, has a wall on each side, and there is not even a tablet to tell you which wall, if either, was built by the friend or enemy of your schooldays!

So, rather disappointed in Rome, you wander down the Via Nazionale, past a leaning tower from which Nero is supposed to have watched Rome burning, although the accurate historian will prove to you that the tower was only built long after Nero's death. And suddenly you come to a large square where people under umbrellas are selling matches, ribbons, and lottery tickets. The centre of the square is sunken, and there, amidst the broken Roman pillars, are all the cats of Rome. Nowhere will you find more cats gathered together than in Trajan's Forum, as you discover the place to be. The column at the base of which lie Trajan's ashes is as beautiful as you could wish a column to be. Now you are in the *real* Rome, you feel . . . and a bare hundred yards away you come to the gigantic monument to Victor Emmanuel, so new and white that you imagine half the population of the city must come out early each morning to wash and polish it.

From the monument you walk up a narrow street, much like every other street except that it is more crowded and that cabs and pedestrians are almost inextricably muddled up together. You glance at its

## THE ETERNAL CITY

name and discover that you are in the world-famed Corso Umberto I, *the* Corso! Another disappointment! But then by chance you come to the Piazza di Spagna with its beautiful steps up to Santissima Trinità de' Monti, and you have an example of the advantage of leaving your guide-book behind, for Baedeker tells you that "models for artists with their picturesque costumes frequent its vicinity." The student of Baedeker would fail to appreciate one of the most beautiful staircases in the world in his disappointment that the models were not there, for they have all made money in munitions or in other work less picturesque but more remunerative than that of waiting to be hired by an artist.

The curse of a guide-book is even more evident in the case of the Colosseum and the Palatine Hill. Nothing could adequately prepare you for the drab squalor, the old pots and pans, the horrid mean houses that surround the Rome of old. But if you are wandering aimlessly through these mean streets and are seeing things in terms of meanness and squalor, then the great pile of the Colosseum comes to you as a revelation. The Rome that is, suffers severely in your imagination at the expense of the Rome that was, although you remember that this wonderful circus was the scene of such cruelty and beastliness as might make one wonder if there be a God.

There is a great deal to be said for the unconventional way of sightseeing. True, it has its disadvantages, for, in my first week in Rome I did not—dare I confess it?—visit St. Peter's. Time after time I set out for it, but the attraction of some odd little street proved too strong. On the first occasion, instead of admiring St. Peter's, I admired the post office, where people buy stamps and send registered letters at *guichets* round a beautiful old monastery garden. Where else in the world have monk's cells been converted into offices where clerks spend their

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

days receiving parcels for the post? And where else in the world have you so much difficulty to prove who you are when you go there to fetch a parcel or a registered letter? One of these days I may perhaps know what is what in the Forum and the Palatine, and time after time I have set out with "Hare and Baddeley" to find out all about it, but in the Forum my steps turn unconsciously to one of the prostrate porphyry columns by the Basilica of Constantine, and on the Palatine I have my own especial window overlooking the Stadium, with a view of the Via Appia stretching out across the Alban hills in the distance. Occasionally I am disturbed in my doze by the hurried rush of energetic Americans doing the sights with a ragged guide (who will surely tell them when they reach the Colosseum that it could hold eighty thousand people and that early Christian virgins were torn to bits there in the days of Nero, again careless of the fact that it never existed when Nero did). But the disturbance is pleasant, for it makes my own inactivity more attractive and, incidentally, more suitable to the spot. Almost I begin to feel myself a patrician surrounded by slaves—slaves to the task of sightseeing. I never quite know what I dream about on the Palatine, but I know that the dreams are very pleasant.

In the Rome of to-day, of course, you inevitably end up in the Corso. You may do what you can to avoid it by taking side streets, but sooner or later you find yourself in its crowds, with cab-horses coming up behind you and resting their heads on your shoulder, or motor-cars carrying you along gently for a few yards on their bonnets until the engines begin to over-heat owing to the lack of air on the radiators, and the chauffeurs request you to remove yourself with the hope that "you may die killed." And once you are in the Corso you find yourself in the crowds inside or outside the Café Arago. (If the Battle of Waterloo

## THE ETERNAL CITY

was won on the playing fields of Eton, the Battle of Vittoria Veneto was certainly won in the Café Aragno, if one may judge by the number of much-bedecorated officers who were to be found there during the War.) The first time I saw the crowds outside the Café Aragno at midday I thought there was an accident or a revolution and went to ask a policeman what had happened.

Before I had been in Rome a year, of course, I felt that something had gone wrong with my day unless I had spent part of it, however small a part, at the Café Aragno. And the best part of the day to spend there is the early morning, when the Corso is still fresh and cool, and when the *brioche*s are still warm from the oven. When I open my morning papers in London I seldom fail to recall the joy of reading my newspapers at a little three-legged iron table outside the Café Aragno. With the result that London seems to me a beastly place.

If there be another city in the world which grows on one like Rome does, may I, for the sake of my peace of mind, never visit it. Most people drink wine for the love of wine, but I drink wine now for the recollections it brings me of little *trattorie* on the outskirts of Rome, of little restaurants within the city. The taste of Italian wine brings back to me all the sunshine, all the colour, all the laziness, all the noise, of Italy. I forget the miserable days when the water, the gas, and the electricity all failed simultaneously in my flat; when clouds of dust would make the streets almost impassible; when scavengers' strikes would convert Rome into a hell of evil smells. I forget all the discomforts and remember only little narrow streets flanked by yellow or red houses, dark, cavern-like entrances, groups of people sitting at little restaurant tables in the street, laughing, singing. . . .

Alas, that all roads do not, in truth, lead back to Rome!



## THE LEAGUE AT WORK

THE train rushed and swayed on its way towards Geneva, the sleeper was terribly hot, for my travelling companion, a wild-looking man whose luggage labels proclaimed him one of the delegates of a new minor Power to the Assembly of the League of Nations, had carefully closed the window and all the ventilators. I must get a glass of water. My neighbour appeared to be asleep, so without turning on the light I clambered down from my bunk, drank my fill, and climbed up again. Even before I had time to lie down, my companion, who was more wakeful than I had supposed, switched on the light and went very ostentatiously through all his pockets. Scarcely, I thought, the atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence which one would expect to find in Geneva and even in trains bound for Geneva.

But at that time my ideas about the League of Nations were as vague as are the ideas of nine people out of ten. I imagined in those days that the League was a sort of fairy godmother, who, with a wave of a wand, was able to settle the disputes and muddles of the world's politicians. When the Secretary-General pressed an electric button in his study, automatically troops appeared from all the States Members of the League to punish some country that was getting "uppish." I had not then realized that there is nothing, and could be nothing, about the Covenant which could make the League a cure for all the political ailments of the world. The ordinary executive body, the Council, consists of ten delegates, generally Foreign Ministers, appointed by ten different Governments. They receive instructions

## THE LEAGUE AT WORK

from their Governments, and it could hardly be asked of them that when they step out of the train at Geneva they should forget all their national needs and interests, and should become benevolent internationalists. It is perhaps just as well that they keep their national interests in mind, for should they fail to do so their Governments would naturally and inevitably refuse to carry out whatever decisions they might reach at the Council table. At Geneva, then, I discovered nearly as much intrigue as one would discover at any other international conference, but with one important difference. Everything is done in public, and almost every meeting of every Commission is open to any visitor who cares to attend it. Or, rather, to any visitor who can gain admission, for so many people now come to Geneva that no hall there could accommodate all the would-be listeners to an important debate.

These visitors can be divided into two definite classes—the learned and the curious. There are people who enter the Assembly Hall bowed down by the weight of the volumes they have written, but they are not, superficially at any rate, always very interesting. Personally I prefer an old lady whom I noticed during one important debate. Imagine a large table at which are seated the ten Members of the League Council. Facing them are three people—the representatives of two hostile States separated by the official interpreter. Behind these Council Members are their secretaries and experts; behind the interpreter are two rows of journalists and a hundred spectators seated on cane chairs, for all the world like a number of people at a village lecture. The Council is trying to settle a violent frontier dispute, and the interested parties are quarrelling as hard as they can—so much so that one almost fears for the life of the interpreter who sits between them. The fate of several thousands of people is being

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

decided and newspapers in at least two countries of Europe will print special editions to announce the Council's decision. . . . In the front row of spectators sits an old lady quietly knitting a woollen jumper!

Nowadays there is such competition for seats that only journalists and distinguished visitors can be admitted to the more exciting meetings. But how to decide who is a distinguished visitor? How to settle whether an English Member of Parliament is more important than a French Member of Parliament, or whether a First Secretary of Legation of a Balkan Power takes precedence over an American University Professor? I am assured that on more than one occasion delegates who have searched in their pockets for their admission cards have discovered that light-handed visitors have relieved them of these precious pink tickets, and on more than one occasion the officials who have the task of distributing admission cards have been told that if they would give one to some visitor, she or he (generally she) would "make it worth your while."

Burly, but not always very intelligent, Swiss *gendarmes* guard the doors. The result is that people like Professor Henri Bergson or Madame Curie, who have forgotten to bring their tickets, are occasionally refused admission, while a beautifully dressed lady from a remote part of the world trots into the room just behind some distinguished member of the Committee, so that the door-keepers dare not ask her for her card lest she should turn out to be the delegate's wife. If one judged by appearances, one could not but be deeply shocked at the number of wives some delegates thus appear to have. When an admission card cannot be borrowed or stolen the door-keepers have to be tricked. Ladies with tears in their eyes come up to them and say: "I have just come out of the Committee and I have forgotten my purse. I

## THE LEAGUE AT WORK

must go and fetch it as it contains all my wealth." The ladies are pathetic, elegant and beautiful, and even the largest Swiss has somewhere a soft spot. The lady enters to look for her purse, which, of course, she has never lost, and there she sits for the rest of the afternoon.

The persistence of some of the visitors is almost incredible. On one Sunday during the 1924 Assembly, when the sun shone on the lake in a most attractive way, a Committee met all the morning and from four o'clock in the afternoon to ten o'clock in the evening, without even adjourning for dinner. One admired the courage of the delegates, most of whom are no longer as young as they used to be; one admired also those visitors whose interest in foreign affairs made the discussions enthralling for them, but most of all one admired those other visitors who had no more understanding of the "Japanese Amendment" than they have of the Einstein Theory or the habits of the Hittites. I remember one lady trying to obtain admission to the first public session of the Paris Peace Conference by declaring that she was the correspondent of the *Phillipine Islands Gazette*. Of the four hundred journalists who arrived in Geneva to hear Mr. MacDonald and Monsieur Herriot in 1924 there were the alleged representatives of far less influential papers (politically speaking) than that. There was not, I believe, anyone to "cover" the Assembly for *Our Dogs* or *The Poultry World*, but I have no doubt that there will be next year.

All this would be easy to understand if most of the discussions in Geneva were enthralling. Quite frankly they are not. In many cases they deal with abstruse and technical matters. Furthermore, English and French are the two official languages and every speech has to be translated into the one or the other. Much depends upon the translator and, in the interests

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

of accuracy, interpreters are not encouraged to follow the example of one man who once interpreted at a dull and lengthy Committee meeting. It was close on lunch time and the Chairman was hungry. Also he was polite. "We have listened this morning to many very interesting speeches," he said in French, "upon which I am sure my colleagues will desire to reflect. I feel that we should meet again this afternoon and the ideas that have been put forward this morning are of such importance that, if my colleagues agree, I would suggest we should now adjourn." The translator did not hesitate. "The Chairman says," he declared, "that unless we adjourn now we shall be late for lunch."

Interpreters indeed add to the gaiety of nations more frequently than one would expect. It was once suggested that Spanish should become a third official language and, in the translation of one delegate's objection, came the phrase that "at any rate the League will soon become another Tower of Babylon." Again, when the League's scheme for the reconstruction of Austria was being discussed by the Assembly in 1922, one elderly delegate, known to many people as "the father of the League," rose with difficulty to his feet. In a speech of remarkable caution he wished the scheme well. It was the first step of its kind that had ever been taken and the difficulties that lay ahead were enormous. He personally believed the scheme would succeed, but it would be foolish to show too much optimism. When, finally, the delegate tottered rather than walked back to his seat, the interpreter stood up on the platform and, with energetic blows of his fist against his palm, he asserted that the Honourable Delegate declared: "We are going to see this thing through." This particular delegate is stout as well as elderly and it was therefore especially unfortunate that, when some colleagues complimented him upon having retained

## THE LEAGUE AT WORK

his youthful vigour, the verbatim report should have referred to "his youthful figure."

The delegates themselves sometimes do what they can to brighten the proceedings. One woman delegate is reported to have declared, as she looked round on the male members of her Committee, that she felt the League was becoming more and more a League of mothers. And another delegate stated during a discussion on opium that "We shall never stamp this out until we put our backs into it."

But brighter moments are admittedly rare, and possibly the League meetings "draw" so well because, even during the Assembly, there is not very much else to be done in Geneva. Even if one is not interested in the work of any particular Committee, the entrance hall of the Secretariat has its attractions. At one moment you may see Mr. H. G. Wells coming in from lunch with Dr. Nansen; Monsieur Paderewski and Monsieur Romain Rolland have come to watch the proceedings from their homes farther up the lake; Monsieur Politis, the famous Greek international lawyer, and Monsieur Scialoja, his Italian counterpart enter arm in arm, although a year previously their two countries were not far from war; all eyes are turned upon the Abyssinians, who walk up the steps clad in black silk cloaks, with tight white linen trousers, and with felt hats that they appear to have bought in Piccadilly. The hall of the Secretariat is therefore seldom dull, whereas the rest of Geneva often is, especially when there is no important meeting to bring delegates from all parts of the world.

There are still diplomats who feel that the home of the League should be Paris or Brussels rather than Geneva, and some members of the Secretariat have still not lost hope that one day their offices will be in a more exciting spot. Most of the members of the International Secretariat, however, and they are

## THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF EUROPEAN CHAOS

international, for they come from over thirty different countries—are becoming reconciled to Switzerland. They have their golf club and their hockey club, their dramatic club and their social club. In summer they can bathe from a boat in the lake during the luncheon interval, and in winter they can spend their Sundays ski-ing at St. Cergues. They have even been known to dance at the Kursaal, which, for Geneva, is a very dissipated thing to do.

An American journalist once complained that Geneva gave him no "copy," since his paper wanted "news and not facts." And it is unfortunately true that a large section of the public is more interested in the doings of a lunatic who kills ten people than in the doings of a doctor who saves ten people. It is for this reason that the steadily increasing work of the League is so little known. Had the Sarajevo murder of 1914 been submitted to the Council, War might well have been avoided, and most papers would have devoted ten lines at the most to the settlement of the crisis. It would have created considerably less excitement than did the Italian occupation of Corfu in 1923. Not everybody can appreciate the romance of international politics when decisions are taken by a number of middle-aged or elderly respectable-looking gentlemen, sitting round a table, listening to lengthy interpretations of speeches made by their colleagues.

But the romance is there all the same, as you can realize when you remember the chasms of black hatred that separated the nations of the world a decade ago. Constructive work is always slower than destructive work, but, bit by bit, the League of Nations is building up a new relationship between peoples, is bridging these chasms. If you are still sceptic (or "septic," as one foreign delegate once declared himself to be), then go to Geneva for a Council meeting to see things for yourself. International

## THE LEAGUE AT WORK

peace is not, or should not be, a matter for party or national politics. Therefore I am not, I hope, breaking my resolution to avoid politics when I venture to assert, in concluding this book, that the League of Nations is the brighter side of chaos.



# INDEX

ALBAN HILLS, 69-72

Allenstein, 25, 26

Amalfi, 34, 88-90

Antwerp, 53, 54

Arys, 26-31

BÂLE, 37, 140, 143, 156-158

Belgium, 51-54, 101-104

Bellagio, 112-114

Berlin, 55-63, 92, 93

Berne, 154, 155

Bessarabia, 116-121

Bolsheviks and East Prussia,  
25-32

Bolsheviks and Poland, 73-78

Bolsheviks and Rumania,  
118-120

Bolsheviks at Genoa, 200-208

Bromberg, 77

Bruges, 53, 143

Bucharest, 47-50, 121

Budapest, 50

Bydgoszcz, 77, 80

CAPORETTO, 131

Capri, 34

Carpathians, the, 49, 98-100

Castelli Romani, 69-72

Champéry, 150-153

Clemenceau, M., 18, 22

Cluj, 50, 187, 188

Constantine, King, 179-186

DANZIG, 25, 26, 27, 32, 53,

73, 76, 135-139

Dniester, River, 118-120

Düsseldorf, 37, 170, 171

EAST PRUSSIA, 25-32

Essen, 166-168, 170, 171

FASCISTI, 39-43, 160, 186

France, 20-24, 64-67, 80-84,  
140-143

Frascati, 68-72

GENEVA, 125, 144, 156, 158,  
214-221

Genoa, 200-208

Germany, 25-32, 37, 38, 55-  
63, 92, 93, 115, 164-171

Gradziadzu, 75

Graudenz, 75-77

Grindelwald, 85

ITALY, 33-36, 39-43, 68-72, 87-  
91, 94-96, 105-111, 112-114,  
122-126, 127-134, 144, 145,  
146-148, 159-163, 172, 173,  
189-192, 200-208

KAPP "PUTSCH," 164-171

Kishinew, 116-118, 120

LAUSANNE, 156

League of Nations, 136, 158,  
180, 214-221

Litvinof, M., 204, 205

Lloyd George, Mr., 18, 201,  
204

Lucerne, 155, 180-185

MADRID, 174-178

"Marseillaise," the, 143

Massey, Mr., 22, 23

## INDEX

- Masurian Lakes, 26-28  
 Metz, 140-143  
 Moldavia, 48, 119  
 Monfalcone shipyard, 133, 134  
 • Monte Carlo, 82, 84  
 Munich, 115, 164, 165  
 Mussolini, Signor, 39-43  
 • NAPLES, 33-35, 39, 87-91  
 OSTENDE, 51-53, 80  
 PADUA, 127, 128  
 Paris, 20-24, 64-67  
 Poland, 64-79, 80, 135  
 Polish "Corridor," 25, 26, 73-79, 135  
 ROME, 40, 41, 68, 69, 94, 95, 105-111, 122, 124, 144, 145-148, 189-192, 209-213  
 Rousseau, J. J., 144  
 Rumania, 47-50, 116-121, 187, 188  
 SAN MARINO, 159-163  
 Sapieha, Prince, 79  
 Siena, 172, 173  
 Sinaia, 98-100  
 Sorrento, 33, 34, 36, 88-90  
 Spain, 174-178  
 St. Moritz, 179, 180, 193  
 Stambulisky, M., 203, 204  
 Strasbourg, 140-143  
 Switzerland, 37, 38, 44-46, 85, 86, 93, 94, 125, 126, 140, 143, 144, 149-158, 179-186, 193-195, 214-221  
 TCHICHERIN, M., 202, 204, 207, 208  
 Thorn, 73-76  
 Tighina, 118-120  
 Torunn, 73  
 Transylvania, 49, 50  
 Trieste, 132-134  
 VATICAN, the, 94, 95, 105-111  
 Venice, 95, 128, 185, 186  
 Vienna, 196-199  
 Vistula, River, 74, 75  
 WILSON, PRESIDENT, 20, 21  
 YPRES, 101-104, 169  
 ZERMATT, 44-46  
 Zoppot, 25, 139  
 Zurich, 93, 94, 155